CHAPTER IV.

WITCHCRAFT IN BOSTON.

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THE storm of terror and death, called the Witchcraft Delusion, which swept over Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, left its traces on the early life of the New-England colonies. While it raged in Europe, thirty thousand victims perished in the British Islands, seventy-five thousand in France, one hundred thousand in Germany, and corresponding numbers in Italy, Spain, Switzerland, and Sweden. Witchcraft in New England was of a sporadic and spasmodic type compared with its epidemic and protracted virulence in the Old World; and yet the thirty-two executions in the New-England colonies, for supposed confederation with devils, have filled a larger space in history and in public attention than the thirty thousand similar executions which occurred in the mother country. English writers at this day, when they need striking proofs of the superstitions of former times, take their illustrations from the records of New-England witchcraft. A full and impartial account of English and Scottish diabolism has never commended itself, as a subject of historical investigation, to a modern English writer. Such a record as New England has of its later witchcraft is a desideratum in the historical literature of old England. The theme is one of strange and perpetual interest, and as a subject for psychological study it will never lose its hold on the minds of men. The recent development of what is called "Spiritualism" is only another phase of phenomena which, under the names of magic, sorcery, necromancy, enchantment, mesmerism, fetichism, and witchcraft, are as old as history, and universal as the human race.

The New-England colonists had no views concerning witchcraft and diabolical agency which they did not bring with them from the Old World. The prosecutions in England were never carried on with a blinder zeal and more fatal results than during the first twenty years after Governor Winthrop and his company landed at Boston. James Howell, who was later "Historiographer Royal" to Charles II., says in his *Familiar Letters*, Feb. 3, 1646: —

"We have multitudes of witches among us; for in Essex and Suffolk there were above two hundred indicted within these two years, and above the half of them executed. . . . I speak it with horror! God guard us from the Devil! for I think he was never so busy upon any part of the earth that was lightened by the beams of Christianity." [1]

Again he writes, Feb. 22, 1647: —

"Within the compass of two years, near upon three hundred witches were arraigned, and the major part of them executed, in Essex and Suffolk only. Scotland swarms with them more and more, and persons of good quality are executed daily." [2]

At that time the professional "Witch-Finder-General," Matthew Hopkins, was passing through the English counties practising his trade, and under the sanction of the courts subjecting his victims to every species of torture and indignity. His method of "searching" and "watching" suspected persons was recommended in the law books, and was, we shall see, by order of the General Court of Massachusetts, applied to the first witch executed in the Massachusetts Colony. His water-test was tried in Connecticut, and the report was that the victims "swam like a cork." These outrageous proceedings were not condemned by the English clergy, either of the Established Church or of the Dissenters. The excellent Richard Baxter, author of *The Saints' Everlasting Rest*, says in his *Certainty of the World of Spirits*, 1691, p. 52: "The hanging of a great number of witches in Suffolk and Essex, by the discovery of one Hopkins, in 1645 and 1646, is famously known. Mr. [Dr. Edmund] Calamy went along with the judges in the circuit to hear the confessions, and see there were no fraud or wrong done them." There was no doubt in the legal or clerical profession as to the reality of witchcraft,[3] or as to the duty of the courts to extirpate it. The English law books gave the most minute directions as to the means of detecting, and the form of trying, witches. Some of these atrocious and nauseating details we must give, in order that the spirit of the age and the subject we are considering may be understood.

Concerning the later witch-trials of New England an enormous mass of original information is accessible, in the form of court records, depositions,

[1] P. 386, edition of 1673.

[2] P. 427.

[3] Sir William Blackstone, more than seventy years after the last witch was executed in New England, wrote in his *Commentaries* (4, 61): "To deny the possibility, nay, actual existence of witchcraft and sorcery is at once flatly to contradict the revealed Word of God in various passages in both the Old and New Testament; and the thing itself is a truth to which every nation in the world hath in its turn borne testimony, either by examples seemingly well attested, or by prohibitory laws, which at least suppose the possibility of commerce with evil spirits."

W. E. H. Lecky, in *History of Rationalism*, p. 38, says: "It is, I think, difficult to examine the subject with impartiality, without coming to the conclusion that the historical evidence establishing the reality of witchcraft is so vast and so varied, that it is impossible to disbelieve it without what, on other subjects, we should deem the most extraordinary rashness. The defenders of the belief, who were often men of great and distinguished talent, maintained that there was no fact in history more fully attested; and that to reject it would be to strike at the root of all historical evidence of the miraculous. . . . In our day, it may be said with confidence that it would be altogether impossible for such an amount of evidence to accumulate round a conception which had no substantial basis in fact."

and contemporary accounts; but concerning two of the earlier cases which occurred in Boston there is not a report of a trial, a deposition, or a court record to be found. Contemporary allusions to the earlier cases, sometimes without even the surname of the person executed, are all the information concerning them which has come down to us. Governor Winthrop, in his Journal, under the date of March, 1646–47, made his entry: "One [blank] of Windsor arraigned and executed at Hartford for a witch."[1] The Connecticut records make no mention of it, and nothing more is known of the case. Mr. John Hale, in his *Modest Inquiry*, 1704, says: "Another that suffered on that account [of witchcraft] was a Dorchester woman." Only recently has the name of this woman come to light.[2] Of the four persons executed for witchcraft in Boston, only one, who suffered in 1688, is mentioned by Increase or Cotton Mather, who did more than all other early New-England writers to preserve the record of such events. Of the twelve executions which took place in New England before 1692,[3] the Christian names of only four of the sufferers are known.

1. In Boston, the earliest execution for witchcraft was that of Margaret Jones, of Charlestown, on June 15, 1648. There seems to be no evidence that any earlier case of witchcraft was under investigation in the colony. Her husband, Thomas Jones, was arrested at the same time on the same charge, but he was not convicted. The little we know of Margaret Jones we find in Governor Winthrop's Journal. She was evidently a strong-minded woman, and a skilful practitioner of medicine. She used simple remedies and small doses, yet they produced extraordinary effects. Perhaps she adopted the principle of *similia similibus curantur*, and was a precursor of Hahnemann. Her predictions as to cases treated by the heroic method proved to be true. Her touch seemed to be attended with mesmeric influence. There was no charge that she had bewitched any one, and the usual phenomena of spectres, fits, spasms, etc. were wanting. The main evidence on which she was convicted was her imps, which were detected by "watching" her, after the Hopkins method. She was tried by the General Court, which was almost wholly composed of the original founders of the colony. John Winthrop was Governor; Thomas Dudley, Deputy-Governor; John

[1] Vol. II. 374, edition of 1853.

[2] She was the wife of Henry Lake. This appears in a letter of Nathaniel Mather, of Dublin, to his brother Increase, dated Dec. 31, 1684, acknowledging the receipt of *Remarkable Providences*, 1684. He says: "Why did you not put in the story of Mrs. Hibbins's witchcrafts, and the discovery thereof, and also of H. Lake's wife, of Dorchester?" *Mather Papers*, 4 *Mass. Hist. Coll.*, viii. 58.

[3] The following is the list of the twelve persons who were executed for witchcraft in New England before 1692, when twenty other persons were executed at Salem, whose names are well known. It is possible that the list is not complete; but I have included all of which I have any knowledge, and with such details as to names and dates as could be ascertained:—

1646, — "Woman of Windsor," Connecticut (name unknown), at Hartford. 1648, — Margaret Jones, of Charlestown, at Boston. 1648, — Mary Johnson, at Hartford. 1650? — Henry Lake's wife, of Dorchester. 1650? — Mrs. Kendall, of Cambridge. 1651, — Mary Parsons, of Springfield, at Boston. 1651, — Goodwife Bassett, at Fairfield, Conn. 1653, — Goodwife Knap, at Hartford. 1656, — Ann Hibbins, at Boston. 1662, — Goodman Greensmith, at Hartford. 1662, — Goodwife Greensmith, at Hartford. 1688, — Goody Glover, at Boston.

Endicott, Richard Bellingham, Richard Salstonstall, Increase Nowell, Simon Bradstreet, William Hibbins (whose widow was executed for witchcraft in 1656), John Winthrop, Jr., and William Pynchon (who conducted the witch examinations at Springfield a few years later), were Assistants. The records of the Court, which on topics of less interest are very full, give no details or even mention of the trial. The Court Records and the Deputies' Records, however, for May 18, give an order concerning Margaret Jones and her husband, without the mention of their names, as follows: —

"This court, desirous that the same course which hath been taken in England for the discovery of witches, by watching [them a certain time], may also be taken here with the witch now in question: [It is ordered that the best and surest way may forthwith be put in practice, to begin this night, if it may be, being the 18th of the 3d month] that a strict watch be set about her every night, and that her husband be confined to a private room and watched also" (Deputies' Records, with the words in brackets inserted from the Court Records).[1]

The theory of the English law books was that every witch had familiars or imps, which were sent out by the witch to work deeds of darkness, and that they returned to the witch once a day, at least, for sustenance, and usually in the night. By watching the witch these imps might be detected, and thus furnish certain proof of guilt in the accused.

Michael Dalton's *Country Justice, containing the Practice, Duty, and Power of Justices of the Peace*, was a common book in the colonies, and was quoted in the witch trials at Salem. In the chapter on "Witchcraft" it has the following directions: —

"Now against these witches, being the most cruel, revengeful, and bloody of all the rest, the Justices of the Peace may not always expect direct evidence, seeing all their works are the works of darkness, and no witnesses present with them to accuse them; and, therefore, for the better discovery, I thought good here to insert certain observations, partly out of the 'Book of Discovery of the Witches that were arraigned at Lancaster, Anno 1612, before Sir James Altham and Sir Edward Bromley, Judges of Assize there,' and partly out of Mr. [Richard] Bernard's 'Guide to Grand Jurymen.'

"These witches have ordinarily a familiar, or spirit, which appeareth to them, sometimes in one shape and sometimes in another; as in the shape of a man, woman, boy, dog, cat, foal, hare, rat, toad, etc. And to these their spirits they give names, and they meet together to christen them (as they speak). Their said familiar hath some big or little teat upon their body, and in some secret place, where he sucketh them. And besides their sucking the Devil leaveth other marks upon their body, sometimes like a blue or red spot, like a flea-biting, sometimes the flesh sunk in and hollow (all which for a time may be covered, yea, taken away, but will come out again in their old form). And these Devil's marks be insensible, and being pricked will not bleed, and be often in their secretest parts, and therefore require diligent and careful search. These first two are main points to discover and convict those witches; for they fully prove that those witches have a familiar, and made a league with

[1] The *Mass. Records*, iii. 126; and ii. 242.

the Devil. So, likewise, if the suspected be proved to have been heard to call upon their spirits, or to talk to them, or of them, or have offered them to others. So if they have been seen with their spirit, or to feed something secretly; these are proofs that they have a familiar. They have often pictures [images] of clay or wax, like a man, etc., made of such as they would bewitch, found in their house, or which they may roast or bury in the earth, that as the picture consumes, so may the parties bewitched consume." (Edition of 1727, p. 514.)[1]

Mr. John Gaule, in his *Select Cases of Conscience touching Witches and Witchcraft*, 1646, p. 77, condemning the barbarous methods of discovering witches, thus describes the mode of "watching a witch" in use at the time:—

"Having taken the suspected witch, she is placed in the middle of a room upon a stool or table, cross-legged, or in some uneasy posture, to which if she submits not, she is bound with cords. She is there watched, and kept without meat or sleep for the space of four-and-twenty hours, — for they say within that time they shall see her imp come and suck. A little hole is likewise made in the door for the imps to come in at."

Mr. Baxter, writing in 1691, says that, three weeks before, a woman in Brightling, in Suffolk, was examined before the magistrates, "searched [for witch-marks] and watched for four-and-twenty hours."

Margaret Jones was "searched" and "watched;" the fatal witch-marks were discovered, and her imp was seen in "the clear day-light," as appears in the record of the case which Governor Winthrop made in his Journal at the time: —

"[June 15, 1648].[2] At this court, one Margaret Jones, of Charlestown, was indicted and found guilty of witchcraft, and hanged for it. The evidence against her was—

"1. That she was found to have such a malignant touch, as many persons, men, women, and children, whom she stroked or touched with any affection or displeasure, or etc. [*sic*], were taken with deafness, or vomiting, or other violent pains or sickness.

"2. She practising physic, and her medicines being such things as, by her own confession, were harmless, — as anise-seed, liquors, etc., — yet had extraordinary violent effects.

"3. She would use to tell such as would not make use of her physic, that they would never be healed; and accordingly their diseases and hurts continued, with relapse against the ordinary course, and beyond the apprehension of all physicians and surgeons.

[1] Here are specimens of the English "Blue Laws" of that period in the same volume: "A person not coming to some church or chapel forfeits 12*s.* to the poor, to be levied by distress" (p. 71). "He who keeps any servant in his house or other person not coming to church for a month together forfeits £10 per month" (p. 71). "If any shall strike another in a church or church-yard, or draw a weapon in a church or church-yard, with intent to strike, and being thereof convicted, shall be adjudged to have one of his ears cut off; and *having no ears*, then shall be burned in the cheek with a hot iron having the letter F." (p. 70). The first edition of Dalton's *Country Justice* appeared in 1619, and the last, the twelfth edition, in 1746. The work was revised and re-edited from time to time, and was a popular and standard authority in England for more than a hundred years.

[2] No date appears against this paragraph in Winthrop. The date next preceding is June 4, 1648. The true date of the execution was doubtless June 15, as appears in Danforth's *Almanac* for that year.

"4. Some things which she foretold came to pass accordingly; other things she would tell of, as secret speeches, etc., which she had no ordinary means to come to the knowledge of.

"5. She had, upon search, an apparent teat . . . as fresh as if it had been newly sucked; and after it had been scanned, upon a forced search, that was withered, and another began on the opposite side.

"6. In the prison, in the clear day-light, there was seen in her arms, she sitting on the floor, and her clothes up, etc., a little child, which ran from her into another room, and the officer following it, it was vanished. The like child was seen in two other places to which she had relation; and one maid that saw it, fell sick upon it, and was cured by the said Margaret, who used means to be employed to that end. Her behavior at her trial was very intemperate, lying notoriously, and railing upon the jury and witnesses, etc., and in the like distemper she died. The same day and hour she was executed, there was a very great tempest at Connecticut, which blew down many trees, etc." (ii. 397, ed. of 1853).

Mr. John Hale, in his *Modest Inquiry*, p. 17, mentions the case, but none of the incidents recorded by Winthrop. He was born in Charlestown, was twelve years old at the time, and with some neighbors visited the condemned woman in prison the day she was executed. He says: —

"The first [witch executed] was a woman of Charlestown, Anno 1647 or 1648. She was suspected, partly because that, after some angry words passing between her and her neighbors, some mischief befell such neighbors in their creatures [cattle] or the like; partly because some things supposed to be bewitched, or have a charm upon them, being burned, she came to the fire and seemed concerned.

"The day of her execution I went, in company of some neighbors, who took great pains to bring her to confession and repentance; but she constantly professed herself innocent of that crime. Then one prayed her to consider if God did not bring this punishment upon her for some other crime; and asked if she had not been guilty of stealing many years ago. She answered, she had stolen something; but it was long since, and she had repented of it, and there was grace enough in Christ to pardon that long ago; but as for witchcraft she was wholly free from it, — and so she said unto her death."

There is no other contemporary mention of the case. It is a horrible record; and in downright, stolid superstition and inhumanity was not surpassed, if, indeed, it was equalled, at Salem forty-four years later. That it was an incident characteristic of the time, and that similar atrocities were being committed in every nation in Europe without shocking the sensibilities of the most refined and cultivated men of that day, are the only mitigating circumstances which can be suggested.

Thomas Jones, the husband of the woman executed, found, on his release from prison, that his troubles had only begun. He resolved to leave the country, and took passage in the Boston ship "Welcome," riding at anchor before Charlestown. She had on board eighty horses and one hundred and twenty tons of ballast. The weather was calm, yet the ship fell to rolling, and so deep it was feared she would founder. Great weight

was placed on one side to trim her, and she would heel over on the other side. The County Court of Boston was then in session, and hearing that the husband of the executed witch was on board, between whom and the captain a dispute had arisen as to his passage-money, sent officers to arrest him, one of them saying "the ship would stand still as soon as he was in prison." No sooner was the warrant shown, than the rolling of the ship began to stop, and after the man was in prison it moved no more. Governor Winthrop narrates this story in his Journal.[1]

2. Mary Parsons, wife of Hugh Parsons, of Springfield, was the victim in the second execution for witchcraft in Boston, May 29, 1651. The earliest mention of the matter in the Court Records is as follows: —

"May 8, 1651. The Court understanding that Mary Parsons, now in prison, accused for a witch, is likely through weakness to die before trial, if it be deferred, do order that on the morrow, by eight of the clock in the morning, she be brought before and tried by the General Court."[2]

Two indictments were filed against her: (*a*) For "using diverse devilish practices by witchcraft to the hurt of the persons of Martha and Rebecca Moxon," daughters of Mr. George Moxon, minister of Springfield; and (*b*) "for murdering her own child." She pleaded not guilty to the first indictment, and to the second "she acknowledged herself guilty." As the penalty was death for each offence, she was convicted on the second charge, and sentenced to be hanged. In the margin is a note that she was "reprieved till May 29."[3] The depositions in the case taken at Springfield, which have been preserved, all relate to the charge of witchcraft. Her confession that she murdered her own child is evidence of the insanity of the woman. As neither the Records, nor any contemporary account that he could find, mention her execution, Governor Hutchinson said, "It does not appear that she was executed." Dr. J. Hammond Trumbull, a few years ago, found in a London newspaper, *Mercurius Publicus*, of Sept. 25, 1651, a letter dated "From Natick, in New England, July 4, 1651," not signed, but doubtless written by Mr. John Eliot, the Indian apostle, which says: —

"The state of things here amongst us seems more troublesome, and we have had sad frowns of the Lord upon us, chiefly in regard of fascinations and witchcraft; for now God calls his people into near communion with himself in visible and explicit covenant with him, only he doth not love it should be visible. Four in Springfield were detected, whereof one was executed for murder of her own child, and was doubtless a witch; another is condemned, a third under trial, a fourth under suspicion."

Mary Parsons, therefore, was without doubt executed on or near the date named, May 29, 1651; but whether at Springfield or Boston does not yet appear. A passage in Cotton Mather's *Wonders of the Invisible World*,

[1] Vol. II. 399.

[2] *Mass. Records*, iv. pt. i. 47.

[3] In the *Deputies' Records*, iii. 229, the date of the trial is May 22.

which has puzzled writers on the subject, refers, I have no doubt, to this case, and fixes Boston as the place of the execution: "We have been advised by some credible Christians yet alive, that a malefactor, accused of witchcraft as well as murder, and executed in this place more than forty years ago, did then give notice of a horrible plot against this country by witchcraft," etc.[1]

The numerous and very curious depositions in the Springfield witch cases are printed in the appendix to Mr. S. G. Drake's *Annals of Witchcraft*, 1869. Parsons and his wife had for several years mutually accused each other of practising witchcraft. She testified that he had bewitched their own child to death, and also two children of Henry Smith, who died in June, 1648. "She is the worst enemy I have," he said. He was arrested, tried, and condemned in 1650 for "diverse devilish practices and witchcrafts, to the hurt of diverse persons;" and, among others, Mr. Moxon's children.[2] He was a brickmaker, and also a sawyer. He had a dispute with Mr. Moxon about some brick which he had agreed to furnish for building. The price of brick had advanced, and when Mr. Moxon held him to his contract he retorted by saying "he would be even with him [Moxon]." To this statement Parsons replied in court: "I said not 'I would be even with him;' but this I said: 'I would puzzle him in the bargain.'" Mr. Moxon's children were favorite subjects for bedevilment. In 1649 Parsons was prosecuted for libel by Widow Marshfield, because the wife of Parsons had said that the widow had bewitched Mr. Moxon's children. He was fined twenty-four bushels of corn and twenty shillings. Perhaps these diabolical molestations were the cause of Mr. Moxon's return to England with his family in 1652.[3]

3. The third execution for witchcraft in Boston was on June 19, 1656, and Mrs. Ann Hibbins was the victim. She was the widow of William Hibbins, a leading merchant of Boston and one of the most honored citizens of the colony, who died in 1654. He was deputy to the General Court in 1641–42, and Assistant from 1643 to the day of his death. He served the colony as its agent in England; and being a man of wealth and high social position, his wife had mingled in the best society of Boston. It is said by Mr. Drake and others that she was the sister of Richard Bellingham, who was Governor in 1641 and Deputy-Governor at the time of her execution. That a woman occupying such a social position should have come to such an ignominious death, is a strange incident in the

[1] P. 14, London edition, 1862.

[2] The magistrates set aside the verdict of the jury, and the case came before the General Court at Boston, May 27–31, 1652, when he was acquitted. *Mass. Rec.*, iii. 273.

[3] Governor Hutchinson and several other writers on the subject have erroneously given the date of the Springfield cases "about the year 1645." In the *N. E. Hist. and Geneal. Reg.* for October, 1870, is printed, from an unpublished manuscript, an early draft of Governor Hutchinson's account of New-England witchcraft, with notes accompanying the text giving fuller details of all the cases mentioned by him. A separate issue of the same paper appeared, entitled *The Witchcraft Delusion of* 1692. *By Gov. Thomas Hutchinson, . . . with Notes*, by W. F. Poole; 1870, 43 pp. 4to. On page 6 of this issue further information may be found as to the Parsons cases.

case. Another is, that not a particle of the contemporary evidence on which she was convicted has been preserved. Governor Winthrop had died, and the two Mathers had not yet come upon the stage, or we should have had copious details. Governor Hutchinson, who wrote more than a century later, gave, partly from Hubbard and partly from tradition or conjecture, some incidents which help to fill out the picture.

She was first tried and condemned in 1655; but the magistrates set aside the verdict, and she was brought for trial before the General Court. The Records, under the date of May 14, 1656, give the following: —

"The magistrates not receiving the verdict of the jury in Mrs. Hibbins her case, having been on trial for witchcraft, it came and fell of course to the General Court. Mrs. Ann Hibbins was called forth, appeared at the bar; the indictment against her was read, to which she answered not guilty, and was willing to be tried by God and this Court. The evidences against her were read, the parties witnessing being present, her answers considered on; and the whole Court being met together, by their vote determined that Mrs. Ann Hibbins is guilty of witchcraft, according to the bill of indictment found against her by the jury of life and death. The Governor in open Court pronounced sentence accordingly, declaring she was to go from the bar to the place from whence she came, and from thence to the place of execution, and there to hang till she was dead.

"It is ordered, that warrant shall issue out from the Secretary to the Marshal-General, for the execution of Mrs. Hibbins on the 5th day next come fortnight, presently after the lecture at Boston, being the 19th of June next, the Marshal-General taking with him a sufficient guard." [1]

Governor Hutchinson, in 1765, wrote of the case as follows: —

"The most remarkable occurrence in the colony in the year 1655 was the trial and condemnation of Mrs. Ann Hibbins for witcheraft. . . . Losses in the latter part of her husband's life had reduced his estate and increased the natural crabbedness of his wife's temper, which made her turbulent and quarrelsome, brought her under church censure,[2] and at length rendered her so odious to her neighbors as to cause some of them to accuse her of witchcraft. The jury brought her in guilty, but the magistrates refused to accept the verdict; so the cause came to the General Court, where the popular clamor prevailed against her, and the miserable woman was condemned and executed. Search was made upon her body for teats, and in her chests and boxes for puppets, images, etc.; but there is no record of anything of that sort being found. . . . It fared with her as it did with Joan of Arc in France, — some counted her a saint and some a witch, and some observed solemn marks of Providence set upon those who were very forward to condemn her." [3]

[1] *Mass. Rec.*, iv. pt. i. 269.

[2] [A MS. volume by Captain Keayne in the Massachusetts Historical Society's cabinet contains reports of Cotton's sermons and some of the proceedings of the church in cases of discipline, particularly that of Mrs. Hibbins.—ED.]

[3] *History of Massachusetts*, i. 173, edition of 1795. "Others have said that Mr. Hibbins, losing £500 at once by the carelessness of Mr. Trerice the shipmaster, it so discomposed his wife's spirit that she scarce ever was well settled in her mind afterwards, but grew very turbulent in her passion and discontented, on which occasion she was cast out of the church, and then charged to be a witch, giving too much occasion, by her strange carriage, to common people so to judge." — Hubbard, *General History of New England*, p. 574.

There was doubtless in the case of Ann Hibbins, as there was in that of Margaret Jones, the cruel "searching" and "watching," the finding of witch-marks and imps. The majority of her judges were not Boston men, and would not be carried away by the local prejudice against her as a turbulent and quarrelsome woman. They would have required the proofs prescribed in the law books. Hugh Parsons, though convicted by a local jury, was acquitted by the General Court; and apparently because in the great mass of depositions as to his bad disposition, his ominous shaking of the head, uttering threats, cutting puddings when boiling in the bag, whetting saws at night, and drying up milch cows, there was no testimony as to witch-marks and imps.[1]

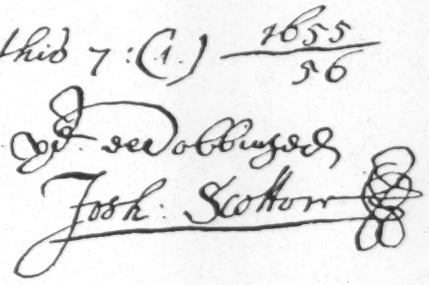
Mrs. Hibbins was a widow, named Moore, when she married her late husband, and had three sons residing in England. The youngest son, hearing of his mother's troubles, embarked for America, and probably arrived before her execution. Her will, dated May 27, 1656, is in the Suffolk Probate records,[2] and is a calm, well-worded, and sensible document. She named as the overseers and administrators of her estate (appraised at £344 14*s.*), Thomas Clarke, Edward Hutchinson, William Hudson, Joshua Scottow, and Peter Oliver. Thomas Clarke was one of the two deputies of Boston in the General Court; Joshua Scottow and Peter Oliver were select-men, and the others were leading citizens of the town. In a codicil to her will she says: "I do earnestly desire my loving friends Captain [Edward] Johnson and Mr. Edward Rawson to be added to the rest of the gentlemen mentioned as overseers of my will, to whom I commit, namely, to Capt. Johnson['s] care and trust my two chests and desk with all things therein, to be kept entirely whole and in kind, till my [eldest] son John, or his order, authenticated by a public notary, shall come and demand the same." Captain Johnson was the deputy from Woburn, and author of *Wonder-working Providence of Sion's Saviour in New England*, London, 1654; and Mr. Rawson was Secretary of the General Court. To Mr. Rawson she delivered the keys of her chests and desk, and also her papers. "My desire is that all my overseers would be pleased to show so much respect for my dead corpse as to cause it to be decently interred, and, if it may be, near my late husband." Three days before her execution, hearing that her son was coming, she added this provision to her will: "I give my son Jona-than twenty pounds over and above what I have already given him, towards his pains and charge in coming to see me, which shall be first paid out of my estate." On the morning of her execution she made this further addi-

[1] Thomas Cooper, appointed to watch Mary Parsons, testified that she spoke very bitterly of her husband, and said she could prove he was a witch; to which Cooper replied: "Methinks, if he were a witch, there would be some apparent sign or mark of it upon his body, for they say witches have teats upon some part or other of their body; but so far as I hear there is not any such apparent thing upon his body, — which she did not deny." Drake, *Annals*, p. 245.

[2] [The will is in the *N. E. Hist. and Geneal. Reg.*, July, 1852, p. 283. The inventory is dated April 30, 1657, and shows "a gold weding ring, a diamond ring, a taffety cloake, silk gown and kirtle, pinck colored petticoat," etc., with "money in the desk." — Ed.]

tion: "My further mind and will is (*sic*), out of my sense of the more than ordinary affection and pains of my son Jonathan in the times of my distress, I give him, as a further legacy, ten pounds."

It is evident from the quality of the persons whom she chose as the overseers of her estate, the reasons she assigns for her choice, and other expressions in her will, that she had friends in her distress who sought to save her from her dreadful doom. Some of this sympathy seems to have found public expression in very positive terms; for Mr. Joshua Scottow, nine months later, found it necessary to apologize to the General Court for what he had said or done with reference to the matter. His apology is preserved in the *Massachusetts Archives*, cxxxv. 1.[1] He stated that he did not intend to oppose the proceedings of the General Court in the case of Mrs. Ann Hibbins: "I am cordially sorry that anything from me, either in word or writing, should give offence to the honored Court, my dear brethren in the church, or any others."



How the two noted ministers of Boston, John Wilson and John Norton, regarded the condemnation and execution of Mrs. Hibbins is shown by a story which Governor Hutchinson relates: —

"Mr. Beach, a minister in Jamaica, in a letter to Dr. Increase Mather in the year 1684, says: 'You may remember what I have sometimes told you your famous Mr. [John] Norton once said at his own table before Mr. [John] Wilson, Elder [James] Penn, and myself and wife, etc., who had the honor to be his guests, — that the wife of one of your magistrates, as I remember, was hanged for a witch only for having more wit than her neighbors. It was his very expression; she having, as he explained it, unhappily guessed that two of her persecutors, whom she saw talking in the street, were talking of her, — which cost her her life, notwithstanding all he could do to the contrary, as he himself told us'" (i. 173).

Increase Mather, seventeen years of age, was graduated from Harvard College the same month that Ann Hibbins was executed, and Cotton Mather was born seven years later. These names are to appear frequently in the subsequent records. It is evident there was some superstition in the colony before the time of these notable men. That neither of them, in their numerous papers on witchcraft, ever mentioned the case of Mrs. Hibbins may possibly be explained by the feeling they had in common with Mr. Norton and Mr. Wilson, that she had been unjustly condemned.

[1] [This paper, the signature to which is herewith given, is the first in a volume labelled "Witchcraft Papers," in the *Massachusetts Archives*, at the State House. Scottow survived the greater witchcraft folly of 1692, and died Jan. 20, 1697–98. Sewall records: "Jan. 21. It seems Capt. Scottow died the last night. Thus the New England men drop away. Jan. 22. Capt. Joshua Scottow is buried in the old burying-place. Extream cold. No minister at funeral; nor wife nor daughter." Sewall was one of the bearers (ii. 467). — ED.]

4. The fourth and last execution for witchcraft in Boston was on Nov. 16, 1688,[1] when Goody Glover was hung for the charge of bewitching the children of John Goodwin. The story is told at length in, and furnishes the main theme of, Cotton Mather's *Memorable Providences*, 1689.[2] As Governor Hutchinson has made an excellent abstract of the facts in the case, and as he knew some of the persons who were concerned in it, we will allow him to relate the main incidents: —

"In 1687 or 1688[3] began a more alarming instance than any that had preceded it. Four of the children of John Goodwin, a grave man and good liver at the north[4] part of Boston, were generally believed to be bewitched. I have often heard persons who were in the neighborhood speak of the great consternation it occasioned. The children were all remarkable for ingenuity of temper, had been religiously educated, and were thought to be without guile. The eldest was a girl of thirteen or fourteen years. She had charged a laundress with taking away some of the family linen. The mother of the laundress was one of the wild Irish, of bad character, and gave the girl harsh language; soon after which she fell into fits which were said to have something diabolical in them. One of her sisters and two brothers[5] followed her example, and, it is said, were tormented in the same part of their bodies at the same time, although kept in separate apartments and ignorant of one another's complaints. . . . Sometimes they would be deaf, then dumb, then blind; and sometimes all these disorders together would come upon them. Their tongues would be drawn down their throats, then pulled out upon their chins. Their jaws, necks, shoulders, elbows, and all their joints would appear to be dislocated, and they would make the most piteous outcries of burnings, of being cut with knives, beat, etc., and the marks of wounds were afterwards to be seen. The ministers of Boston and Charlestown kept a day of fasting and prayer at the troubled house; after which the youngest child made no more complaints. The others persevered, and the magistrates then interposed, and the old woman was apprehended; but upon examination would neither confess nor deny, and appeared to be disordered in her senses. Upon the report of physicians that she was *compos mentis*, she was executed, declaring at her death the children should not be relieved" (ii. 24–26).

A narrative of the case, wholly independent of Cotton Mather's account, which Hutchinson followed, is found in a letter of Joshua Moody, minister

[1] The date of the execution is mentioned in none of the contemporary narratives; it appears, however, in Judge Sewall's *Diary*, i. 236: "Nov. 16, 1688 About 11 o'clock the Widow Glover is drawn by to be hanged. Mr. Larkin seems to be marshal. The constables attend, and Justice Bullivant there."

[2] The book was reprinted in London in 1691, with a commendatory preface by Richard Baxter, in which he says: "This great instance cometh with such full, convincing evidence, that he must be a very obdurate Sadducee that will not believe it." The four ministers of Boston and Charlestown — Samuel Willard, Joshua Moody, James Allen, and Charles Morton — prefix a note "To the Reader," in which they, as eye-witnesses, vouch for the truth of the extraordinary statements contained therein, and they concur in its principles. "It is needless," they say, "for us to insist upon the commendation either of the author or the work; the former is known in the churches; the latter will speak sufficiently for itself." An abstract of the narrative appears in Mather's *Magnalia*, ii. 456–465, edition of 1853.

[3] Mr. Mather says, "About midsummer in the year 1688." In Hutchinson's first draft he was not in doubt as to the date, and gave it correctly: "In 1688 began," etc.

[4] Mr. Mather says "the *south* part of Boston," and describes Mr. Goodwin as "a sober and pious man, whose trade is that of a mason."

[5] The names and ages of the children were, Martha, thirteen; John, eleven; Mercy, seven; and Benjamin, five.

of the First Church, addressed to Increase Mather in London, who was then residing there as agent of the colony. The letter is dated Oct. 4, 1688, when the affair was in progress, and before the Glover woman was convicted: —

"We have a very strange thing among us, which we know not what to make of, except it be witchcraft, as we think it must needs be. Three or four children of one Goodwin, a mason, that have been for some weeks grievously tormented, crying out of head, eyes, tongue, teeth; breaking their neck, back, thighs, knees, legs, feet, toes, etc.; and then they roar out, '*Oh my head!*' '*Oh my neck!*' and from one part to another the pain runs almost as fast as I write it. The pain is doubtless very exquisite, and the cries most dolorous and affecting; and this is notable, that two or more of them cry out of the same pain in the same part at the same time; and as the pain shifts to another place in one, so in the other, and thus it holds them for an hour together and more; and when the pain is over they eat, drink, walk, play, laugh, as at other times. They are generally well a nights. A great many good Christians spent a day of prayer there. Mr. Morton came over, and we each spent an hour in prayer; since which, the parents suspecting an old woman and her daughter living hard by, complaint was made to the justices, and compassion had so far, that the women were committed to prison, and are there now. Yesterday I called in at the house, and was informed by the parent that since the women were confined the children have been well while out of the house; but as soon as any of them come into the house, then taken as formerly; so that now all their children keep at their neighbors' houses. If they step home they are immediately afflicted, and while they keep out are well. I have been a little larger in this narrative, because I know you have studied these things. We cannot but think the Devil has a hand in it by some instrument. It is an example, in all the parts of it, not to be paralleled. You may inquire further of Mr. Oakes [Edward, Jr., the bearer of the letter], whose uncle [Dr. Thomas Oakes],[1] administered physic to them at first, and he may probably inform you more fully."[2]

While the woman was on trial her house was searched, and several small images or puppets, made of rags and stuffed with goat's hair, were found; and being produced in Court, the woman acknowledged that her way of tormenting the objects of her malice was by wetting her finger and stroking these images. She did this in the presence of the Court, and one of the children present fell into fits before the whole assembly. "This the judges had their just apprehensions at; and causing the repetition of the experiment, found again the same event of it." She was asked whether she had any one to stand by her. She replied, she had; and looking into the air, she added, "No, he is gone." She then confessed that she had *one*, who was her *prince*, with whom she maintained some sort of a communion. That night she was heard expostulating with a devil for deserting her, and serving her so basely and falsely; and hence she had confessed all. At the

[1] "Skillful physicians were consulted for their help, and particularly our worthy and prudent friend, Dr. Thomas Oakes, who found himself so affronted by the distempers of the children that he concluded nothing but hellish witchcraft could be the original of these maladies." — *Mem. Prov.*, p. 3, ed 1691. A "skillful physician" seems to be in the ground-plan of nearly every witch case in New England.

[2] 4 *Mass. Hist. Coll.*, viii. 367, 368.

trial one Hughes testified that the woman accused had bewitched to death a woman named Howen six years before, and that the Howen woman on her death-bed had stated this to her. Hughes had sometimes seen Glover come down her chimney. While Hughes was preparing to give her testimony, her boy was afflicted in the same woful manner as the Goodwin children had been. She accused Glover of doing this, to which Glover replied that she did it because of the wrong done to herself and daughter. Hughes denied that she had done her any wrong. "Well then," said Glover, "let me see your child, and he shall be well again." On her seeing the boy he recovered.

While the condemned woman was in prison Cotton Mather visited her twice, that he might pray with her and give her spiritual advice. He states that she never denied the guilt of witchcraft, but confessed very little about the circumstances of her confederacies with the Devil. She said that she used to be at meetings where her *prince* and four more were present. She told him who these four were; but as to her *prince*, her account plainly was that he was the Devil. He asked her many questions, to which, after long silence, she replied that she would fain give full answers, but *they* would not give her leave. "*They*, who are *they?*" She answered that they were her spirits, or her saints. At another time she spoke of her *two mistresses*, and on being asked who they were she fell into a rage. Mr. Mather advised her to break her covenant with hell. She replied that he spoke a very reasonable thing, — but she could not do it. He asked if she had a desire, or would consent, to be prayed for, to which she replied: "If prayer would do her any good, she could pray for herself." The question being repeated, she said she could not consent unless her spirits would give her leave. "However," says Mr. Mather, "against her will I prayed with her, which, if it were a fault, was in excess of pity." When he had finished she thanked him "with many good words;" but he was no sooner out of her sight than she took a long, slender stone, and "with her finger and spittle fell to tormenting it."

While on the way to her execution, she said that the children should not be relieved by her death, for others had a hand in it as well as she, and she named her own daughter as one of them. "It came to pass, accordingly," says Mr. Mather, "the three children continued in their furnace, which grew seven times hotter than before;" and they "gave more sensible demonstrations of an enchantment, growing very far towards a possession of evil spirits."

These Goodwin children performed some very strange pranks, which resemble those reported at the *séances* of modern Spiritualists. "They would fly like geese, and be carried with an incredible swiftness through the air, having just their toes now and then upon the ground, and their arms waved like the wings of a bird. One of them, at the house of a kind neighbor and gentleman (Mr. Willis), flew the length of the room, about twenty feet, none seeing her feet all the way touch the floor." They com-

plained that they were in red-hot ovens, sweating and panting as if they were really in that situation. They cried out from blows by cudgels, and though no blows or cudgels were seen by the bystanders, the marks in red streaks were seen upon their bodies. They jumped into the fire and into water, and their deliverances were so many that it led the tender-hearted narrator to consider "whether the little ones had not their [good] angels in the plain sense of our Saviour's intimation." Nothing so discomposed them as a religious exercise. At family prayers they would "roar, and shriek, and holla," to drown the voice of devotion. "In short," says Mr. Mather, "no good thing must then be endured near those children, who, while they are themselves, do love every good thing in a measure that proclaims in them the fear of God."

On November 14 Mr. Mather took the eldest of the bewitched children, a girl thirteen years of age, whose symptoms were more marked and obdurate than those of the others, to his own house; in order, as he says, that he might do the afflicted family a favor; that he might have the best opportunity to investigate the phenomena, and furnish himself with evidence and argument with which to confute the Sadducism of the age. He kept the girl in his family till the following spring, enduring from her every species of trouble and annoyance, and putting in practice his doctrine of dealing with witchcraft and possession wholly by prayer and faith.

For several days "she applied herself to such actions, not only of industry, but of piety, as she had been no stranger to." November 20 she cried: "*They* have found me out!" and went into her abnormal fits, which continued at intervals for four or five months. The strange incidents which occurred are recorded in *Memorable Providences*. One of them was that an invisible horse would be brought to her by her spirits, mounting which, she would ride strangely about the room; and on one occasion, "to our admiration, she rode (that is, was tossed, as one that rode) up the stairs."

Mr. Mather never revealed the names of the four persons whom the Glover woman named as her confederates, or the three persons whom the Goodwin girl accused as her tormentors; "for," he said, "we should be very tender in such relation [narration] lest we wrong the reputation of the innocent by stories not enough inquired into." No other prosecutions followed: Mr. Mather's plan was to keep the accusations within the narrowest limits, and to combat witchcraft and possession with spiritual agencies. He had implicit faith in the efficacy of prayer. He applied his theory to the Goodwin children. They all recovered; and he wrote his *Memorable Providences* to prove to the world three propositions: (1) That there are witches; (2) To show the operations of witchcraft; and (3) To teach how witchcraft should be treated.[1] The four ministers of Boston who recom-

[1] Four years later, when the witch troubles broke out in Salem Village, Mr. Mather attempted to put his method into operation, by advising that the "afflicted children" be separated and taken out of the excitement of the Village. "I did myself offer to provide meat, drink, and lodging for no less than six of the afflicted, that so an experiment might be made, whether Prayer and Fasting, upon the removal of the distressed, might not put a period to the trouble then rising,

mended the book say in their prefatory note, "Prayer is a powerful and effectual remedy against the malicious practices of devils and those who covenant with them." Says Mr. Mather: —

"I do now publish the history while the thing is fresh and new; and I challenge all men to detect so much as one designed falsehood, yea, so much as one important mistake, from the egg to the apple of it. I am resolved after this never to use but just one grain of patience with any man that shall go to impose upon me a denial of devils or of witches. I shall count that man ignorant who shall suspect; but I shall count him downright impudent, if he assert the non-existence of things which we have had such palpable convictions of" (p. 40, 41).

He concludes his narrative in these words: —

"All that I have now to publish is, that Prayer and Faith was the thing which drove the devils from the children; and I am to bear this testimony unto the world: That the Lord is nigh to all them who call upon Him in truth, and that blessed are all they that wait for Him" (p. 44).

Hutchinson says: "The children returned to their ordinary behavior, lived to adult age, made profession of religion, and the affliction they had been under they publicly declared to be one motive of it. One of them I knew many years after. She had the character of a very sober, virtuous woman, and never made any acknowledgment of fraud in the transaction."[1] John Goodwin and his wife Martha, who had been members of Mr. Morton's church in Charlestown, were received, May 25, 1690, into Mr. Mather's church. Their four children were subsequently received as members. The eldest son Nathaniel, July 22, 1728, took out letters of administration on Cotton Mather's estate.

Two other cases, which were then supposed to be witchcraft, and were similar in character to that of the Goodwin children, occurred in Boston, in 1692 and 1693. As they were both under the immediate care of Cotton Mather, and were treated by his peculiar method of prayer and fasting, with suppressing the names of suspected confederates of the Devil, and managing the affairs as quietly as possible, they passed off without injury to the life or reputation of any one, and without attracting much public attention. The first was the case of Mercy Short, and the second that of Margaret Rule. Mr. Mather wrote out a detailed account of each of these cases and withheld them from publication; but he sometimes loaned them to his

without giving the civil authority the trouble of prosecuting those things." (*More Wonders*, p. 11.) Again he says: "In fine, the country was in a dreadful ferment, and wise men foresaw a long train of dismal and bloody consequences. Thereupon they first advised that the afflicted might be kept asunder in the closest privacy; and one particular person (whom I have cause to know), in pursuance of this advice, offered himself to provide accommodations for any six of them, that so the success of more than ordinary prayer with fasting might with patience be experienced, before any other courses were taken." (*Magnalia*, i. 210, Hartford edition, 1853.) This advice was not accepted by the local magistrates at Salem.

[1] *Hist. of Mass.*, ii. 26. In his first draft, Hutchinson says she was "one of my tenants, a grave, religious woman."

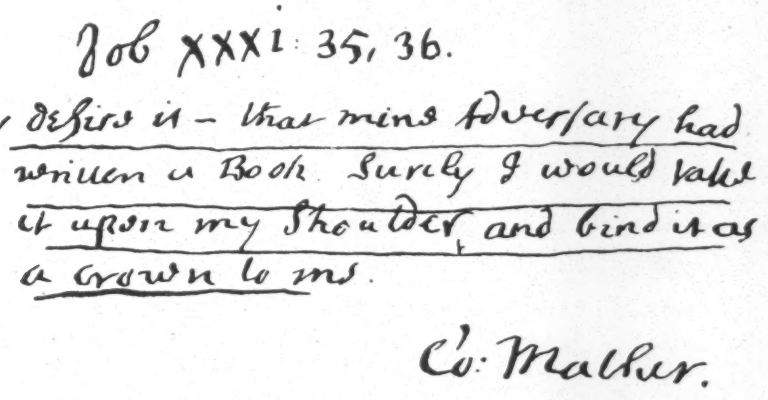
friends for perusal.[1] Robert Calef, who had a bitter, personal quarrel with Mr. Mather, obtained possession of the account of the case of Margaret Rule, and printed it in his *More Wonders*, 1700, without the consent of the author.[2] It is entitled, *Another Brand Pluckt out of the Burning*, and in it the writer says: —

"This young woman [Rule] had never seen the affliction of Mercy Short, whereof a narrative has already been given; and yet about half a year after the glorious and signal deliverance of that poor damsel, this Margaret fell into an affliction, marvellous, resembling hers in almost all the circumstances of it; indeed, the afflictions were so much alike, that the relation I have given of the one would almost serve as a full history of the other."

The Mercy Short case has never been printed, and till recently was supposed to be lost. About ten years ago Dr. Samuel F. Haven, the accomplished librarian of the American Antiquarian Society, in looking through the Mather manuscripts in that library, found one entitled, *A Brand Pluckt out of the Burning*, and on examination it proved to be the long-lost Mercy Short narrative. Dr. Haven, in announcing the discovery, promised to print it with notes; but he has not yet found leisure to fulfil his promise. He has, however, for the purpose of this sketch, kindly furnished a copy of the narrative, with permission to make such use of it as the brief limits of this paper will permit. The publication of the entire narrative, which is the fullest description of any single case of diabolical molestations that has occurred

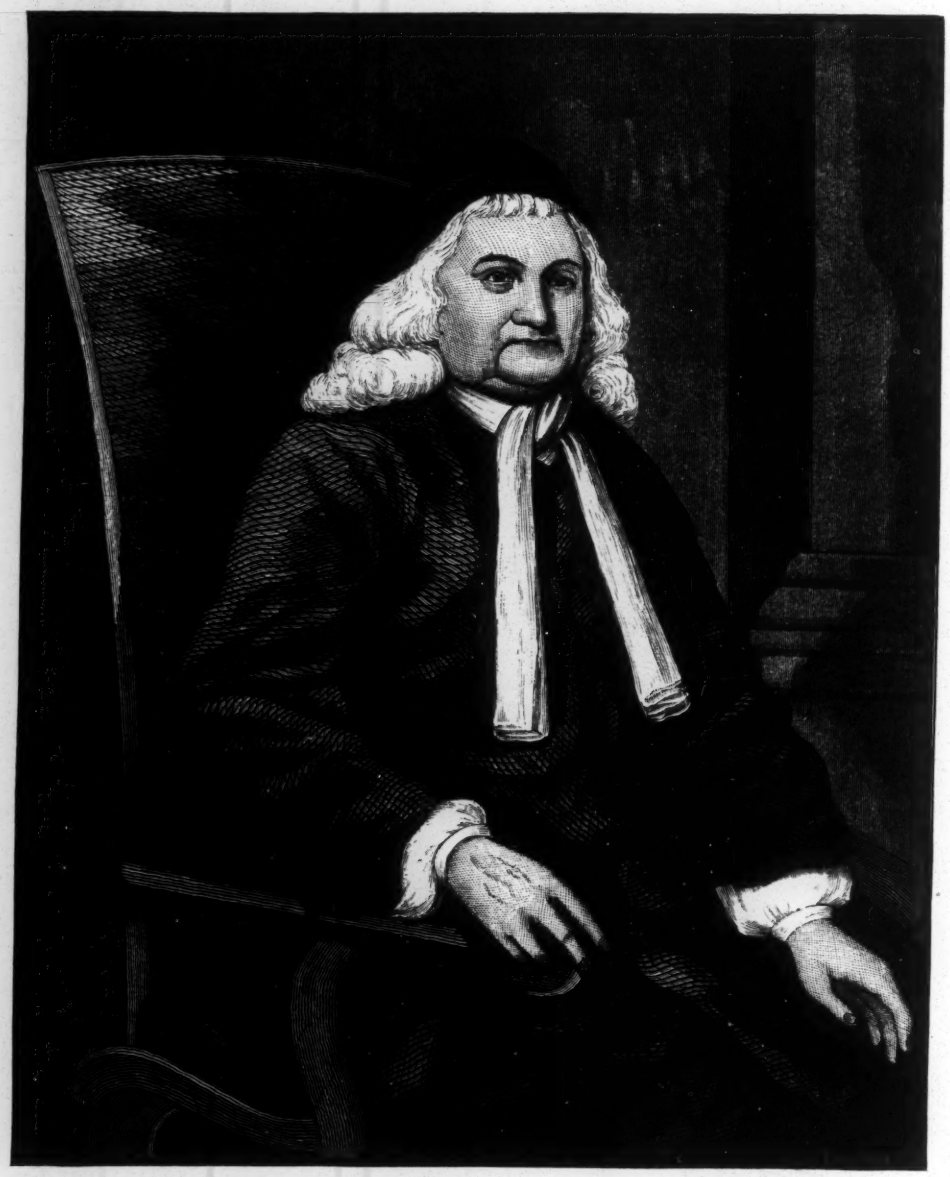
[1] "I do not write this," said Mr. Mather, in a prefatory note to his Margaret Rule case, "with a design of throwing it presently into the press; but only to preserve the memory of such memorable things, the forgetting whereof would neither be pleasing to God nor useful to men; as also to give you and some others of peculiar and obliging friends a sight of some curiosities."

[2] Calef, in his preface, says: "I received it of a gentleman who had it of the author, and communicated it to me with his express consent." Mr. Mather, in *Some Few Remarks*, p. 36, says: "He [Calef] has been so uncivil as to print a composure of mine utterly without and against my consent; but the good Providence of God has herein overruled his malice; for if that may have impartial readers, he will have his confutation, and I my perpetual vindication." Mr. Mather's own copy of *More Wonders* is in the Massachusetts Historical Society's Library. Inscribed on the inside of the cover, in his own handwriting, is the following: "Job xxxi, 35, 36. My desire is — that mine Adversary had written a Book. Surely I would take it upon my Shoulder, and bind it as a Crown to me. — Co: Mather."



in New England, will, with Dr. Haven's valuable notes, be an important contribution to the literature of this subject. As the Mercy Short case antedates by several months that of Margaret Rule, it properly comes first under consideration.

The case of Mercy Short is important, as it was contemporaneous with



SAMUEL SEWALL.[1]

[1] [A steel-plate engraving after an original portrait owned by his descendants, the Misses Ridgway, of Boston, is given in the *Sewall Papers*, i., and is followed in the present cut. Another likeness is owned by Samuel Sewall, of Burlington, Mass., and has also been engraved. — ED.]

the Salem trials and executions; and it illustrates the principles and methods of the Boston ministers, so unlike those of Salem. The supposed agent of her afflictions was then under arrest for witchcraft, and on other evidence was soon after condemned and executed at Salem. In the testimony against the alleged criminal, which has been preserved,[1] there is no allusion to Mercy Short, or to any incident recorded in the narrative, — which confirms the statement of its author, that he had strictly forbidden the names of any person suspected to be mentioned, and had treated the case wholly by spiritual agencies. Judge Sewall once noticed the case in his Diary (i. 370).[2]

The narrative begins with the statement that Mercy Short had been taken captive by the Indians at Newichawanock [Berwick, Maine], with her three brothers and two sisters; and that they were redeemed at Quebec, and brought by the fleet to Boston. Her father, mother, brother, sister, and others of her kindred had been killed by the Indians.[3]

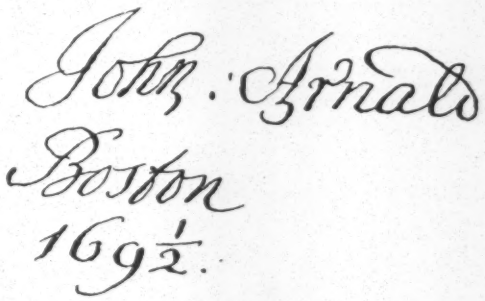
In the summer of 1692, when seven persons from Salem, under accusation of witchcraft, were committed to the jail in Boston,[4] Mercy Short was sent by her mistress on an errand to the prison, and was asked by Sarah Good, one of the suspected witches, and later executed at Salem, for a little tobacco. The girl threw a handful of shavings at her, saying, "That's tobacco good enough for you;" whereupon the woman bestowed some ill

[1] Examination of Sarah Good, in Woodward's *Records of Salem Witchcraft*, i. 1–50.

[2] "Nov. 22, 1692. — Now about, Mercy Short grows ill again as formerly. Nov. 25. — Mr. Mather sent for to her."

[3] On March 18, 1690, a party of French and Indians under Sieur Hertel, and an Indian named Hopegood, "once a servant of a Christian master in Boston," made an attack on Salmon Falls, New Hampshire, a settlement on the Cocheco River, which separates New Hampshire from Maine. Berwick was a village on the opposite bank of the river. The villages were burned, thirty persons were killed, and fifty-four taken into captivity. Mr. Mather (in *Magnalia*, ii. 595-600) gives an account of the massacre, and the shocking details of the suffering of the prisoners on their march to Quebec. "I know not, reader," he says (in Latin), "whether you can read this record with dry eyes; I only know I cannot write it without tears." The fleet, under Sir William Phips, arrived in Boston with the redeemed captives Nov. 19, 1690. Mr. Drake says he can learn nothing of Mercy Short, except the allusion to her in the Margaret Rule narrative. Mr. Savage throws no light upon the name. Mr. Mather, however, in his account of the Salmon Falls massacre, mentions the name of her father and gives a few particulars concerning him and his family. He says, with a dreadful pun on the name: "It would be a *long* story to tell what a particular share in this calamity fell to the family of Clement *Short*. This honest man, with his pious wife and three children, were killed, and six or seven of their children were made prisoners. The most of them arrived safe in Canada, through a thousand hardships; and the most of them were afterwards redeemed from Canada unto their English friends again." The story of the massacre he may have heard from Mercy Short herself. Her social position in Boston seems to have been that of a servant. See also Belknap, *History of New Hampshire*, i. 207, edition of 1813.

[4] [An account rendered by the Boston jailer, John Arnold, for his supplies to those confined



under his supervison in the prison, is given in the Witchcraft Papers, in the *Mass. Archives*, and it is from this document that the annexed signature is copied. — Ed.]

words upon her. Soon after, the girl was taken with "just such, or perhaps much worse, fits than those which held the bewitched people in the County of Essex." At this period *they* (her spirits) made her fast for twelve days together, and she underwent such torments as the Goodwin children suffered. The ministers and Christian people of the town were constantly praying at her bedside, and she was after a few weeks happily delivered. She continued well for several months, and then suddenly fell into a swoon, wherein she lay as dead for many hours; and it was not long before distinct and formal fits of witchcraft returned upon her. One of the ministers of the town took a little company of praying neighbors, and kept a day of fasting and prayer with her and for her; and all the while she was entertained with cursed spectres, whom she saw, heard, and felt. As the minister was preaching to her, on Mark ix. 28, 29, — "And when he was come into the house, his disciples asked him privately, Why could not we cast him out? And he said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing but by prayer and fasting," — she flew at him and tore a leaf of his Bible. She passed through another fast of nine days, and then had a remission of three days, during which she ate a little, and went to church about half a mile from her abode. While there she again fell into fits, and several strong men could carry her no further than the house of a kind neighbor, where she lay for several weeks under the care of pious people who did all they could for her deliverance. A detailed account is given of her spectral torments. Concerning the means used for her recovery, Mr. Mather writes: —

"The methods that were taken for the deliverance of Mr. Goodwin's afflicted family four years ago were the very same we now followed for Mercy Short. Had we not strenuously suppressed all clamors and rumors that might have touched the reputation of people exhibited in this witchcraft, there might have ensued most uncomfortable uproar.[1] But prayer and fasting we knew to be a course against which none but men most brutishly atheistical (and yet such we have among us) could make exceptions. Whereupon a number of pious people did ordinarily every day go in and pray with her; and whereas, many of our people had singularly grounded persuasions that no exercise of religion did give so much vexation unto the spectres in the haunted house as the singing of Psalms, they commonly sang between almost every prayer. But they judged it necessary to fast as well as to pray. Thus the Christians here were put upon spending three days in fasting and prayer, one quickly after the other."

Soon after a third fast, on the evening before the New Year, 1693, her deliverance drew near. She was tormented as never before; she thought she was dying and being carried away by fiends; but "we then quickly saw the death and burial of the trouble now upon her." She roared and shrieked out, "This is more than all the rest." She sent for a minister of the neighborhood, "upon whose coming she called for her clothes, dressed herself,

[1] "As for the spectres that visited and afflicted Mercy Short, there were among them such as were in the shape of several who were doubtless innocent of the crime of witchcraft. It would be a great iniquity for me to judge them otherwise; and the world, I hope, neither by my means, nor by her, will ever know who they were." — *Narrative.*

and came to him with a countenance marvellously altered into a look of discretion and gravity, and said, 'Now go and give to God the greatest thanks you can devise, for I am gloriously delivered; my troubles are gone.' The neighbors gave solemn thanks to that faithful God who gave them to tread upon the lion, and to trample the dragon underfoot."

For seven weeks she was free from her invisible tormentors, yet, from weakness, not without frequent fainting and swooning. At the end of this time, while in the North Meeting-house on Sunday, "she was again seized by her tormentors, just as at the former visitations, and such as, we judged, could not but put an end to her life." Bystanders had pins thrust into their flesh by these fiends while they were molesting Mercy Short. "Yea, several wretches were palpable while yet they were not visible, and several of our persons did sometimes actually lay their hands upon these fiends. The people, though they saw nothing, yet felt a substance that felt like a cat or dog; and though they were not fanciful, they died away at the sight. This thing was too sensible and repeated to be pure imagination." In this assault her spectres made her fast about a week.

Soon after this a good spirit occasionally attended her, that suggested appropriate answers to her diabolical tormentors, and comforted her with assurances that she would be victorious over them. Under the guidance of this spirit she would take a Bible in her hands, and, turning over the leaves without looking at them, "would at last turn down a leaf at the most pertinent place that could be thought of." This instance is mentioned: Her wicked spectres were urging her to sign their book. She took her Bible, and, without looking at the pages, turned down a leaf at Revelation xiii. 8: "All that dwell upon earth shall worship him [the Beast], whose names are *not* written in the book of life of the Lamb." Holding the text up to the spectres, she added that her "name *was* written in the book of the Lamb." At another time, in that same manner, she folded a leaf at Luke vii. 21, and showed it to the spectres: "In the same hour he cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits." Again, her spectres were trying to persuade her that there would be no day of judgment; she showed them Acts i. 11.[1] At the beginning of the fourth week "this notable spirit" bade her be of good cheer and hold her integrity, for the next Thursday, about nine or ten o'clock in the evening, she would be gloriously delivered. "There was," says Mr. Mather, "scarce a night, I think, for near a month

[1] "When she came to herself," says Mr. Mather, "she told me her manner was to turn the leaves till 't was darted into her mind that she had the place, and then she folded." In another place he says: "But that which carries most of marvel in it, is the impulse which directed her into the Scriptures that might have quickened our devotion, if we had seen cause to make use of them. In her trances, a Bible happening to lie on the bed, she took it up, and, without even casting her eyes upon it, folded down a leaf to a text; but of all the texts in the Bible, which do you think it was? It was that of Revelation xii. 12: 'The Devil is come down unto you having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.' Again, she calling for a Psalm-book, has, in the dark, turned over many leaves, and, without reading a syllable, has turned down a leaf to a psalm, advising us to sing it in her behalf. I do affirm that no man living could have singled out psalms more expressive of, or suitable to, her circumstances than those she pitched upon. One of them, I remember, was the beginning of the cii."

which was not all spent in the exercise of devotion by those that watched. The pious people of the north part of Boston did very much pray with the young woman and for her. The weekly meetings of the young people (the sexes apart) were adjourned to the haunted chamber." Mr. Mather says he did all he could that not so much as the name of any one person might suffer the least ill report on the occasion; but "unwearied prayer we thought was our only way now to resist the Devil."

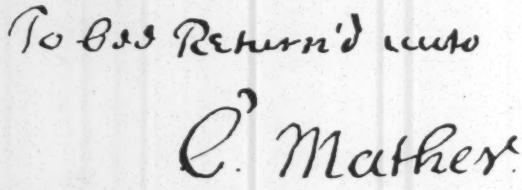
On the Thursday evening mentioned by her, March 16, 1693, she lay very free from her usual torments. The spectres were about; but they found her so hedged in by some unseen defence that they could not touch her. She rallied them on their defeat, and asked them what advice they would give her before they went. They replied, but the writer could not hear the "pestiferous things" they spoke; whereupon they flew away immediately as the hour named arrived, "striking another young woman down for dead upon the floor as they went along; and so, with a raised soul, she bore her part with us in giving thanks to God for her deliverance." Mercy Short was not troubled with any further diabolical molestations. After several days her eyes, which had been blinded as if she had been struck with lightning, regained their sight. "She was left also with an ill habit of body which could not be cured without some time and care."

Dr. Haven has appended to his copy the following note: —

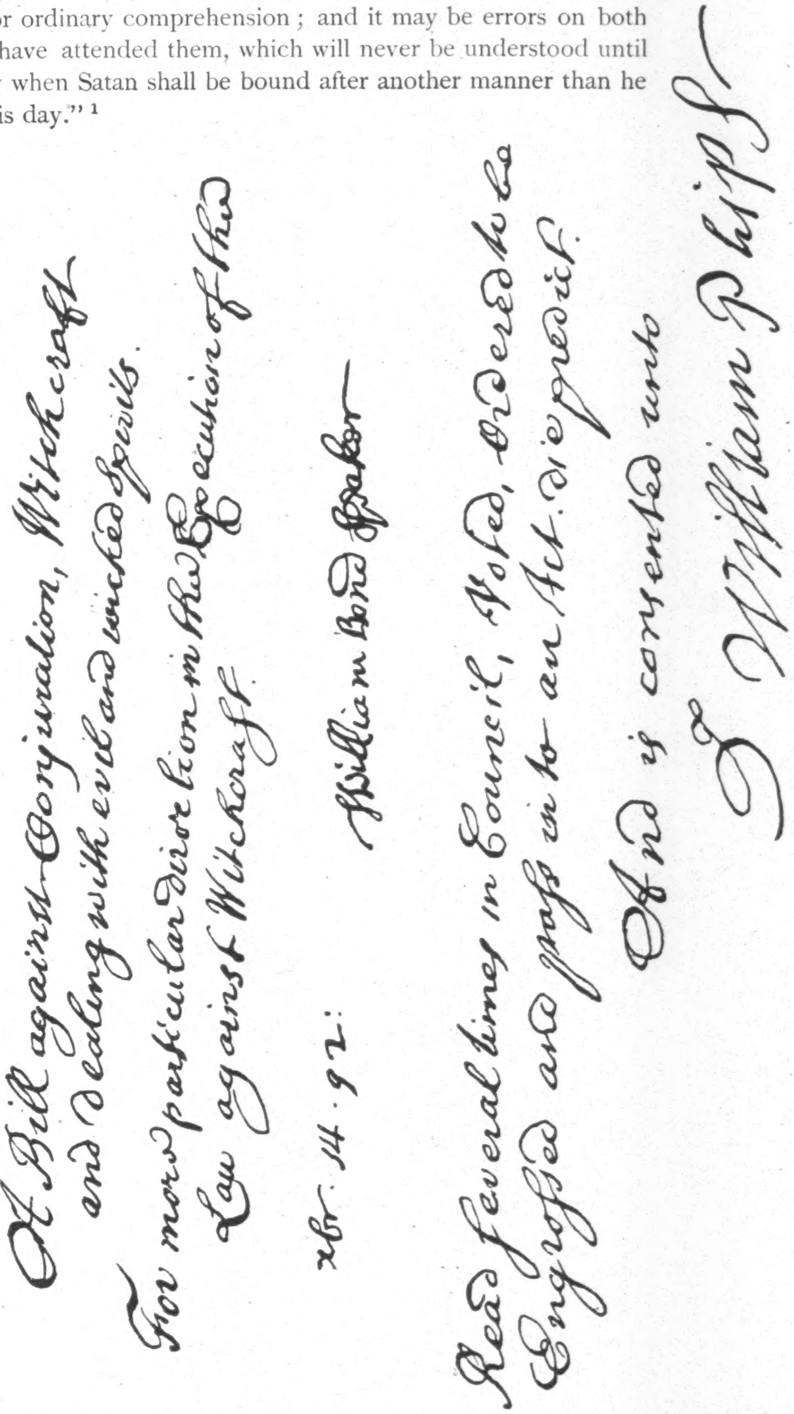
"The first leaf of this account (blank) has on the outside the words, 'To be Return'd unto Cotton Mather.' It seems, therefore, that it was loaned by him for perusal, and it bears the marks of use in that way.[1] At the close of the narrative is the beginning of a statement, by Cotton Mather, of the reason why he forbears to give his opinion 'about the true nature and meaning of these preternatural occurrences;' but all, except a few lines, was on another leaf, which is missing."

From Mr. Mather's other writings we can safely infer the import of the passage which is missing. He never wavered from a full belief in the reality of witchcraft and diabolical possession; but his mind was greatly perplexed as to the nature and meaning of the phenomena. His reading, and the strange proceedings that had passed under his own observation, left his opinions in a very unsettled state. The subject presented dark and hidden mysteries which he could not explain. Writing, in 1701, he says: —

[1] [There is in the Library of the Historical Society a volume of manuscripts, which contains several in the handwriting of Cotton Mather, and two of them relating to witchcraft bear this same provision for a return to the author. No. 5 in this volume is called "Cotton Mather's belief and practice in those thorny difficulties which have distracted us in the day of temptation," and has marginal reflections in another hand. No. 6 is marked "More Wonders of the Invisible World," by C. Mather, in his own hand; and a fac-simile of the same provision in this manuscript is herewith appended. These manuscripts refer to the Margaret Rule case — Ed.]



"About the troubles we have had from the invisible world, I have at present nothing to offer to you, but that I believe they were too dark and deep for ordinary comprehension; and it may be errors on both hands have attended them, which will never be understood until the day when Satan shall be bound after another manner than he is at this day."[1]



THE WITCHCRAFT BILL.[2]

[1] *Some Few Remarks*, p. 42. In another place he says: "This is one of the things that make me think witchcraft will not be fully understood until the day when there shall not be one witch in the world." — *Wonders*, p. 162.

[2] [This fac-simile shows the heading and con-

Cotton Mather had no views on the theory of witchcraft which he did not hold in common with all the other ministers of Boston, — his father, Increase Mather, Samuel Willard, Joshua Moody, and James Allen. We find them together at the meetings for prayer and fasting at the house of John Goodwin, in 1688. They endorsed the narrative and the principles set forth in his *Memorable Providences*, 1689. He wrote and they signed "The Return of several [twelve] ministers consulted by his Excellency and the Honorable Council upon the present witchcrafts in Salem Village," June 15, 1692. They are among the fourteen ministers whose names are appended to the preface of Increase Mather's *Cases of Conscience concerning Witchcrafts*, Oct. 3, 1692; and they with him signed "Certain Proposals made [March 5,

clusion of the original document preserved in the "witchcraft volume" of the *Mass. Archives*. The reading of it "several times" is worth noting, though it may be an accidental shortening of a common formula, — "three several times." — ED.] Its date xbr — that is, Dec. 14, 1692 — was just after the organization of the Supreme Court under the Province charter, which took place December 7. The law is, with a few omissions, almost a literal copy of the English statute on witchcraft enacted in the reign of James I., and was probably passed through the personal influence of the judges of the new court, who were all, with the exception of Danforth, judges in the special court which had tried the witches at Salem. The judges and the magistrates were the last to see the dreadful errors that had been committed at Salem. The special court sat during the interregnum between the repeal of the Colony charter and the setting up of the Province charter. The witches had been tried without any Colony or Province law on the subject, and presumably under the English statute of James I. It was natural that the judges of the new court — Stoughton, Sewall, Richards, and Winthrop — should seek an early occasion to embody in the Province laws the rules and practice which they had followed at Salem, and which they then had no intention to abandon. It is a strange fact, that after what had occurred at Salem those same judges should have been reappointed, and that Stoughton, whose conduct was most atrocious of all, should have receeived the vote of every member present in the Council. Judge Sewall preserves in his Diary, i. 370, an account of the election, which began December 6 and was finished on the succeeding day, as follows: "Tuesday, Dec. 6. A very dark cold day; is the day appointed for choosing the judges. Wm. Stoughton, Esq., is chosen Chief-Justice, 15 votes (all then present); Thomas Danforth, Esq., 12; Major Richards, 7; Maj.-General Winthrop, 7; S. S. [Samuel Sewall], 7; I last voted for Mr. Hathorn [who, as a local magistrate of Salem, was more responsible for the Salem prosecutions than any other man], who had 3. When Maj.-Gen. Winthrop [was] chosen, so I counted it probable that he [Hathorn] might now carry it; but now Major Gedney [another Salem magistrate] had more than he. I esteemed Major Gedney not so suited for the place, because he is judge of the probate of wills. This was in Col. Page's rooms, by papers, on Wednesday, Dec. 7, 1692. Tuesday was spent about Little-Compton business and other interruptions. Were at last 18 assistants present." Judge Sewall did not write much in his Diary about witchcraft, but he records some incidents which show the opposition of the ministers and the people to the position of the Judges: "Oct. 15, 1692. Went to Cambridge and visited Mr. Danforth, and discoursed with him about the witchcrafts. [Danforth] thinks there cannot be a procedure in the Court except there be some better consent of ministers and people" (i. 367). "Oct. 26, 1692. A bill is sent in [to the council] about calling a fast and convocation of ministers, that [the court or the country] may be led in the right way as to the witchcrafts. The season and manner of doing it is such that the Court of Oyer and Terminer count themselves thereby dismissed, 29 noes and 33 yeas to the bill" (i. 367). "Oct. 29. Mr. Russell asked whether the Court of Oyer and Terminer should sit, expressing some fear of inconvenience by its fall. Governor [Phips] said it must fall. Lieut.-Governor [Stoughton] not in town to-day" (i. 368). "Nov. 22, 1692. I prayed that God would choose and assist our Judges, etc., and save New England as to enemies and witchcrafts, *and vindicate the late Judges*, consisting with His justice and holiness, etc., with fasting" (i. 370).

[The witchcraft law of December 14 was published on December 16, and nearly three years later (Aug. 22, 1695) was disallowed by the Privy Council, for a reason quite foreign to the purport of the law: "Being not formed to agree with the statute of King James the First, whereby the Dower is saved to the widow and the Inheritance to the heir of the party convicted, the same hath

1694] by the President and Fellows of Harvard College to the Reverend Ministers of the Gospel in New England," asking for accounts of illustrious and remarkable providences, such as "apparitions, possessions, enchant-

been repealed." The body of the law is in Ames and Goodell's edition of Provincial Laws (i. 90). In the previous May the Special Court for the trial of the Salem witches had been appointed, consisting of those whose signatures follow: —

Several of these were Boston men, and so was Newton, the prosecuting officer. He had come over about 1688, then twenty-eight years old, and had very soon taken a prominent place in the practice of his profession. (Washburn, *Judicial Hist. of Mass.*) Their jurisdiction was within the counties of Suffolk, Essex and Middlesex. They opened their court early in June, at Salem, and met by adjournment June 30, and August 5. They caused the execution of twenty persons, and adjourned, never to meet again, September 22. Sewall (i. 361) tells how in one of the intermissions of the Court, he was present at a "fast at the house of Captain Alden upon his account. Mr. Willard pray'd. I read a sermon out of Dr. Preston, first and second uses of God's alsufficiency. Captain Scottow pray'd; Mr. Allen came in and pray'd; Mr. Cotton Mather, then Captain Hill, sung the first part Psalm ciii.; concluded about 5 o'clock. Brave shower of rain, while Captain Scottow was praying, after much Drought." Alden, who was the eldest son of the Pilgrim of Plymouth and Duxbury, had been accused of tormenting some of the afflicted. He was now seventy, and had been long a respected citizen; still not so circumspect, when they brought him before the Court at Salem, in May, but he could use the strong language of an old sea-dog, as he was, when he was confronted by a lot of wenches whom he had never before seen, and accused of bewitching them. Perhaps his indignation rendered it easier for the magistrates to send him to Boston jail, where he remained fifteen weeks, when he escaped and was concealed by his relatives in Duxbury, till the delusion was passed.

Sewall, it is well known, made a public confession of his mistake on the Fast-day, Jan. 14, 1697, appointed on account of the late tragedy, standing before the congregation of the Old South, while Parson Willard read the "bill" which he "put up," and which is given in *Sewall Papers*, i. 445. In 1720, on the publication of Neal's *New England*, Sewall records: "It grieves me to see New England's nakedness laid open in the business of the Quakers, Anabaptists, witchcraft. The judges' names are mentioned, p. 502. My confession, p. 536, vol. 2. The good and gracious God be pleased to save New England, and me, and my family." — ED.]

ments, and all extraordinary things whereby the existence and agency of the invisible world is more sensibly demonstrated." [1]

The afflictions of Margaret Rule [2] came upon her on Sept. 10, 1693, — she having the evening before been bitterly treated and threatened by a miserable woman living near, who had formerly been imprisoned on the suspicion of witchcraft, and who had frequently cured very painful hurts by muttering over them certain charms. "But the hazard of hurting a poor woman," says Mr. Mather, "that might be innocent, caused the pious people in the vicinity to try whether incessant supplication to God alone might not produce a quicker and safer ease to the afflicted than hasty prosecution of any supposed criminal; and accordingly that unexceptionable course was all that was ever followed." She was assaulted by eight spectres, three or four of which she thought she knew. She was repeatedly charged not to mention publicly the names of any she knew, lest the reputation of some good person might be blasted "through the cunning malice of the great accuser." She privately mentioned to Mr. Mather the names of several, who he says "were a sort of wretches that for many years have gone under as violent presumptions of witchcraft as perhaps any creatures yet living upon earth, although I am far from thinking that the visions of this young

[1] "But for my own part," says Cotton Mather, "I know not that I ever advanced any opinion in the matter of witchcraft, but that all the ministers of the Lord that I know of in the world, whether English, or Scotch, or French, or Dutch, — and I know many, — are of the same opinion with me." — *Some Few Remarks*, p. 42. Again he says: "The name of no one good person in the world ever came under any blemish by means of any afflicted person that fell under my particular cognizance; yea, no one man, woman, or child ever came into any trouble for the sake of any that were afflicted, after I had once begun to look after them." — *More Wonders*, p. 11. Hence his services as the comforter and adviser of persons accused of witchcraft were much sought for. Mr. Brattle says: "With great affection they [the accused] intreated Mr. C. M. to pray with them;" and mentions no other person as performing that duty. He made many visits to Salem for this purpose, while the dreadful tragedy was in progress; but he never attended an examination or a trial. See *Wonders*, p. 109, and *More Wonders*, p. 113. "It may be," he says, "no man living ever had more people under preternatural and astonishing circumstances cast by the Providence of God into his more particular care than I have had." — *Some Few Remarks*, p. 39. Isolated passages can be selected from his sermons on Witchcraft which, separated from their connection and the circumstances under which they were uttered, appear harsh and vindictive. He fought devils, or what he supposed were devils, with fire; but for poor afflicted mortals his words and conduct were full of charity and tenderness. [A class of writers, numbering among them Upham, Quincy, and Bancroft, have presented a view of the Salem witchcraft proceedings which makes Cotton Mather, in greater or less degree, a participator in the Salem method. The passages sometimes quoted by those holding that side in the controversy, now of long standing, are considered by their opponents as susceptible of a modified meaning if taken in connection with the context, or with what they hold to be the tenor of Mather's life. Thus, Aug. 4, 1692, after six of the twenty victims had been executed at Salem, Mather says in a *Discourse on the Wonders of the Invisible World*, afterward embodied in his book of that title: "They [the judges] have used, as judges have heretofore done, the spectral evidences, to introduce their farther inquiries into the lives of the persons accused; and they have thereupon, by the wonderful Providence of God, been so strengthened with other evidences that some of the witch-gang have been fairly executed." It is answered that the word *fairly* means in this connection simply *completely*. Again in his *Wonders*, introducing the trials at Salem, Mather says (London, 1693, p. 55): "If in the midst of the many dissatisfactions among us, the publication of these Trials may promote such a pious thankfulness unto God for justice being so far executed among us, I shall rejoice that God is glorified." — ED.]

[2] Calef says she was about seventeen years of age.

woman were evidence enough to prove them so." These names he never revealed. The story runs that her tormentors kept her from taking food for nine days; pinched her so that black and blue marks were visible; thrust pins into her neck, back, and arms; poured scalding brimstone upon her, raising blisters upon her skin, and filling the house with such a scent of brimstone that scores of witnesses could scarcely endure it. Six persons testified, over their own names, in three affidavits, that they had seen Margaret Rule lifted from her bed by an invisible force so as to touch the garret floor. Two of the witnesses state that —

"It was as much as several of us could do, with all our strength, to pull her down; all which happened when there was not only we two in the room, but we suppose ten or a dozen more, whose names we have forgotten."

Another witness says: —

"I have seen her thus lifted when not only a strong person hath thrown his whole weight across her to pull her down, but several other persons have endeavored, with all their might, to hinder her from being raised." — *More Wonders*, pp. 22, 23.

Besides her black or wicked spectres, she had toward the end of her troubles a white or good spirit, from whom she received marvellous assistance in her miseries. "What lately befell Mercy Short," says Mr. Mather, "from the communications of such a spirit, hath been the just wonder of us all; but by such a spirit was Margaret Rule now also visited." This white spirit, whose face she could not see, but only its bright, shining, and glorious garments, stood by her bed-side comforting her, and counselling her to maintain her faith and hope in God, and assuring her of a speedy deliverance. After she had been more than five weeks in her miseries, this good spirit said to her that a certain man, who was named, had kept a three days' fast for her deliverance, and bade her be of good cheer, for her release was near. Her tormentors returned to their work, but their power was gone. "She insulted over them with a very proper derision, daring them to do their worst; whereupon they flew out of the room, and she returning perfectly to herself, gave thanks to God for her deliverance."

So Margaret Rule's afflictions were ended.[1] Nobody was brought under judicial accusation, and the name of no person suffered thereby. The narrative gives a faithful picture of the popular belief and of the best type of religious activity and experience of that period. The writer of the narrative, judged by the standards of modern belief, was very superstitious; but his acts were confessedly unselfish, charitable, and humane.

[1] This is the case of which Mr. Bancroft wrote thus: "To cover his confusion, Cotton Mather got up a case of witchcraft in his own parish. Miracles, he avers, were wrought in Boston. He wished his vanity protected." — *History of the United States*, Cent. ed. ii. 266.

THE LITERATURE OF WITCHCRAFT.

The Boston literature of witchcraft deserves a notice in this historical sketch. It comprises nearly all that was written on the subject in this country during the last two decades of the seventeenth century; and it so modified and humanized the theory of witchcraft and diabolical possession, that no person could afterwards be convicted of the crime. The following is the list of books and tracts in the order they were written; the dates show when they were published: —

1. Increase Mather's *Remarkable Providences*, 1684.
2. Cotton Mather's *Memorable Providences*, 1689.
3. Cotton Mather's *Wonders of the Invisible World*, 1693.
4. Increase Mather's *Cases of Conscience Concerning Witchcraft*, 1693.
5. Samuel Willard's *Some Miscellany Observations concerning Witchcraft*, 1692.
6. Thomas Brattle's *Account of the Witchcraft in the County of Essex*, written in 1692, and printed in 1798.
7. Robert Calef's *More Wonders of the Invisible World*, 1700.
8. *Some Few Remarks upon a Scandalous Book by one Robert Calef.* By the Parishioners of the Second Church of Boston, 1701.

1. Increase Mather's *Remarkable Providences* has been generally classed as a witch-book, though little less than a third of the volume treats of witchcraft. It is what it purports to be, — "An Essay for the recording of Illustrious Providences, wherein an Account is given of many remarkable and very memorable Events which have happened this last age, especially in New England." The other topics treated are, "Remarkable Sea-Deliverances;" "Other remarkable Preservations;" "Remarkables about Thunder and Lightning;" "Some Philosophical Meditations;" "Deaf and Dumb Persons;" "Remarkable Tempests;" "Remarkable Judgments;" etc. A passage in the life of the author by his son[1] sheds some light on the origin and intent of this book: "A little after this [the Synod of 1679], he formed a Philosophical Society of agreeable gentlemen, who met once a fortnight for a conference upon improvements in philosophy and additions to the stores of natural history." Contributions from this society were sent to a professor[2] at Leyden, and were printed in his *Philosophia Naturalis*. Other contributions were sent to the Royal Society of London. "But the calamity of the times," the biographer adds, "anon gave a fatal and a total interruption to this generous undertaking." The project, however, of observing and recording remarkable providences was carried out in another form. The preface of *Remarkable Providences* states that at a general meeting of the ministers of the Colony, held May 12, 1681, it was resolved that it is "for God's glory and the good of posterity that the utmost care be taken to

[1] *Parentator. Memoirs of Remarkables in the Life and Death of the ever-memorable Dr. Increase Mather.* Boston, 1724, p. 86.

[2] Wolferdus Senguerdius. His "*Philosophia Naturalis*, quatuor partibus, 4°. Lugd. Bat. 1680," is in the Bodleian Library Catalogue.

record and publish all illustrious providences," among which were mentioned "divine judgments, tempests, floods, earthquakes, thunders as are unusual, or whatever else shall happen that is prodigious, — witchcrafts, diabolical possessions, remarkable judgments upon noted sinners, eminent deliverances, and answers of prayer." Invitation was given to the elders in the neighboring colonies to contribute. It was thought that one or two years would be necessary in which to complete the design, and that a large volume should be printed, that "posterity may be encouraged to go on therewith." If the reader will examine the volumes of the Royal Society of London printed at this period, he will find papers as rudimentary and inconsequential as some contained in this early attempt to establish a similar publication in New England. In one chapter, entitled "Several Cases of Conscience considered," Mr. Mather condemned the vulgar superstitions of the day concerning diabolical agency. He showed that it was unlawful to use herbs and to nail up horse-shoes, to drive away evil spirits, and to practise charms and incantations for curing diseases. These, he said, are heathenish superstitions, and practising witchcraft to detect witches; they that obtain health in that way have it from the Devil. A man in Boston gave to one a sealed paper having these words written upon it, "*In nomine Patris, Filii, et Spiritus Sancti*," as an effectual remedy for the tooth-ache. "It is a marvellous and an amazing thing," he says, "that in such a place as New England, where the Gospel hath shined with great power and glory, any should be so blind as to make attempts of this kind; yet some such I know there have been" (p. 185, ed. of 1856).

He recommends that "white witches," which profess to cure diseases, be treated like "black witches." "A good witch is a more horrible and detestable monster than a bad one. Balaam was a black witch, and Simon Magus was a white one. The latter did more hurt by his cures than the former by his curses."

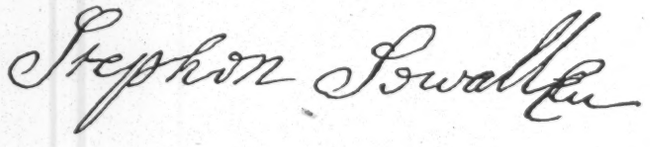
In the chapter "Concerning Things Preternatural which have happened in New England," he gave, as an annalist, abridged accounts of several cases of bedevilment, fuller details of which had been sent to him by his correspondents: (1) The case of Ann Cole, of Hartford, Conn., which resulted in the execution of Goodman Greensmith and his wife, in 1662. The account was sent to him by Mr. John Whiting, minister of Hartford. (2) The case of Elizabeth Knap, "the ventriloqua," of Groton, Mass., in 1671, from an account furnished by Mr. Samuel Willard, then minister of Groton. (3) The troubles preternatural in the house of William Morse, at Newbury, Mass., in 1679, for which Mrs. Morse, in 1680, was sentenced to be hung. She was finally released from prison, though never acquitted nor pardoned. (4) A similar disturbance in the house of Mr. Mompesson, in Tedworth, County of Wilts, England. (5) The molestations of Nicholas Desborough, of Hartford, in 1683, described by Mr. John Russell, minister of Hadley, Mass. (6) The diabolical curiosities in the house of George Walton, of Portsmouth, N. H., in 1682, furnished by Mr. Joshua Moody, then minister

of that town. (7) Uncanny proceedings in the house of Antonio Hortando, near Salmon Falls, N. H., furnished by Mr. Thomas Broughton, of Boston. Then follow two chapters, one on "Demons and Possessed Persons," and another on "Apparitions," which embody the views common at that day on these subjects. These three chapters fill eighty of the two hundred and sixty-two pages of the London reprint of 1856.[1]

The theory of the English courts at the time was, that, if a spectre practising diabolical molestations appeared to any one, it was conclusive and legal evidence that the person so represented was a witch. This theory, accepted by Sir Matthew Hale, was adopted at the Salem trials, and the executions went on till it was supplanted by the more humane doctrine of the Boston ministers, — that the Devil himself, and not the person accused, caused the representation. Mr. Mather, in this paper, condemns the barbarous theory of the English courts. He says: "The Devil does not only himself afflict diseases upon men, but represents the visages of innocent persons to the phansies of the diseased, making them believe that they are tormented by them [the persons represented], when only himself does it." This doctrine he elaborated in his *Cases of Conscience*, 1692.

2. Cotton Mather's *Memorable Providences*, 1689, has already been described (p. 142).

3. Cotton Mather's *Wonders of the Invisible World*, 1693.[2] This most notable book on New-England witchcraft is a miscellaneous collection made up of brief reports of the trials of five of the witches executed at Salem; two discourses on diabolism, by Mr. Mather, and "several remarkable curiosities" connected with the subject. The book was written in the autumn of 1692, while the colony was in an uproar in consequence of the dreadful scenes which were occurring at Salem, and "by special command of his Excellency the Governor of the Province." As Mr. Mather attended none of the examinations or trials at Salem, the reports are, he says, "an abridgment collected out of the court papers, on this occasion put into my hands. I report these matters not as an



[1] Several of the original narratives, from which Mr. Mather made his abridgments, are printed in the *Mather Papers* (4 *Mass. Hist. Coll.* viii.), and, as they give fuller details, are worthy of examination by persons interested in comparing the earlier phenomena with modern spiritual manifestations. Mr. Whiting's account of the Ann Cole case is on pp. 466–469; Mr. Willard's, of the Knap case, pp. 555–571; Mr. Russell's, of the Desborough case, pp. 86–88; and Mr. Moody's, of the Walton case, p. 361. Further information concerning all these cases will be found in my notes to Governor Hutchinson's *Witchcraft Delusion of* 1692, 1870.

[2] [Of Cotton Mather's *Wonders of the Invisible World*, it is thought that the first Boston edition, though dated 1693, was really printed in 1692, as the imprimatur of the London edition of 1693 is dated Dec. 23, 1692. Samuel Mather puts it 1692, and the attestation of Stoughton and Sewall is dated Oct. 11, 1692. There were differences in the titles of these editions. Mr. Charles Deane has what is called a "second" edition, London, 1693; and Harvard College Library has a "third" edition, London, 1693, — both showing some changes in the title, and both abridged from the earlier edition. — ED.]

advocate, but as an historian." Stephen Sewall, the clerk of the court at Salem, and brother of Judge Sewall, furnished these reports.[1] As Stephen Sewall was a stanch believer in the Salem methods, he is doubtless responsible for anecdotes and statements contained therein which have been charged to Mr. Mather's credulity and superstition.[2]

The book is an intense and highly-wrought expression of the author's implicit belief in the reality of the witchcraft and diabolical agency then abroad in the land; and yet, extravagant as it appears to modern readers, it is a faithful representation of the popular alarm and spiritual terror of that period. As to the fact of witchcraft, and that a witch, if legally proved to be such, should not be suffered to live, there was no difference of opinion in the community; but as to the method of detecting and trying witches, there was an animated and bitter controversy concerning what was then called the Salem and the Boston methods. Mr. Mather says: —

"The Devil hath made us like a troubled sea; 't is by our quarrels that we spoil our prayers. To wrangle the Devil out of the country will be truly a new experiment. It is wonderfully necessary that some healing attempts be made at this time. I am so desirous of a share in them, that, if being thrown overboard were needful to allay the storm, I should think dying a trifle to be undergone for so great a blessedness."

Mr. Mather, then less than thirty years of age, undertook to act the difficult rôle of a middle-man and pacificator. He adds: —

"I would most importunately, in the first place, entreat every man to maintain a holy jealousy over his own soul at this time. Let us more generally agree to maintain a kind opinion of one another; but if we disregard this rule of charity we shall give our body politic to be burned" (pp. 11, 12).

He spoke in charitable terms of the judges, as men eminent for wisdom and virtue: —

"They went about the work for which they were commissioned with very great aversion; so they still have been under heart-breaking solicitudes how they might therein best serve both God and man. Have there been any disputed methods used for the discovery of the works of darkness? It may be none but what have had great precedents in other parts of the world. Surely they have, at the worst, been the faults of a well-meaning ignorance (pp. 11, 12). . . . There are very worthy men who are not a little dissatisfied at the proceedings in the prosecution of this witchcraft,

[1] Mr. Mather, Sept. 20, 1692, wrote to Stephen Sewall, addressing him "My dear and very obliging Stephen," asking him for "a narrative of the evidences given in at the trials of half-a-dozen, or if you please a dozen, of the principal witches that have been condemned." This letter has been strangely misrepresented. (See *North American Review*, cviii. 391.) Two days later they had an interview at the house of Judge Sewall, in Boston, when Judge Stoughton and John Hathorn, of Salem, were present, and there was "speaking about publishing some trials of the witches." (Judge Sewall's *Diary*, i., p. 366.)

[2] An anecdote of this class is in Bancroft (ii. 259, ed. of 1876), and is used by a dozen other writers, as a choice illustration of Mr. Mather's credulity: "As this woman [Bridget Bishop] was under a guard, passing by the great and spacious meeting-house in Salem, she gave a look towards the house, and immediately a demon, invisibly entering the house, tore down a part of it" (p. 138, ed. of 1862).

. . . those reverend persons [of Boston] who gave this advice [of June 15] to the honorable council: 'That presumptions, whereupon persons may be committed, and much more convictions, whereupon persons may be condemned as guilty of witchcrafts, ought certainly to be more considerable than barely the accused persons being represented by a spectre unto the afflicted. Nor are alterations made in the sufferers by a look or touch of the accused to be esteemed an infallible evidence of guilt, but frequently liable to be abused by the Devil's ledgerdemains'" (p. 12).

From the principles of this advice, which was drawn up by himself,[1] he never swerved.

4. Increase Mather's *Cases of Conscience concerning Witchcraft*, 1693.[2] While the trials and executions were going on in Salem, in the summer of 1692, Increase Mather was requested by the ministers of Boston and the vicinity to prepare a more elaborate statement of their views than was contained in their advice of June 15, which the judges did not accept. He finished the work October 3, and it was printed soon after in Boston and London. The main purpose of the treatise was to show the injustice and illegality of spectral testimony which was freely admitted in the trials at Salem. Its preface to the "Christian Reader," written by Samuel Willard,[3] is signed by fourteen ministers, who say: "That there are devils and witches the Scriptures assert and experience confirms; they are the common enemies of mankind and set upon mischief. But certainly the more execrable the crime is, the more critical care is to be used in the exposing of the names, liberties, and lives of men (especially of a godly conversation) to the imputation of it." They express their hearty consent to, and concurrence with, what is contained in the treatise. The author meets the whole question at issue in his opening sentence: —

"The first case that I am desired to express my judgment in, is this: 'Whether it is not possible for the Devil to impose on the imaginations of persons bewitched, and to cause them to believe that an innocent, yea, that a pious person does torment them, when the Devil himself does it; or whether Satan may not appear in the shape of an innocent and pious as well as a nocent and wicked person, to afflict such as suffer by diabolical molestations?' The answer to the question must be affirmative." (App. to C. M's *Wonders*, p. 225, ed. of 1862.)

[1] See Cotton Mather's *Life of Increase Mather*, 1723, p. 165, and Samuel Mather's *Life of Cotton Mather*, 1729, p. 45. May 31, 1693, three days before the trials began at Salem, Mr. Mather wrote a letter to John Richards, one of the judges, in which he cautioned the judges against admitting spectral testimony. This letter is printed in *Mather Papers*, 4 *Mass. Hist. Coll.*, viii. 391. If the judges at Salem had accepted the caution and acted upon it, no accused person could have been convicted.

[2] [The Boston edition of *Cases of Conscience* has this imprint: "Boston, printed and sold by Benjamin Harris, at the London Coffee-House, 1693." The London edition of the same year was published by Dunton, but it had a preface of ten pages of matter, — "A True Narrative of some Remarkable Passages. . . . Collected by Deodat Lawson;" and a general title prefixed to the book is *A further account of the Tryals of New England Witches*, etc. The matter of Lawson's had been printed the year before at Boston in ten pages quarto, as a *Brefe and True Narrative of Passages*, etc. — ED.]

[3] "Oct. 11, 1692. Read Mr. Willard's epistle to Mr. Mather's book as to Cases of Conscience touching Witchcraft." — *Judge Sewall's Diary*, i. 367. It is strange that in the year 1692 so little about witchcraft appears in Sewall's Diary.

He then proceeds to prove, by citing many examples, that the Devil can assume any shape he chooses, even that of an angel of light. "This then I declare and testify, that to take away the life of any one, merely because a spectre or devil in a bewitched or possessed person does accuse them, will bring the guilt of innocent blood on the land." The strange exhibitions in the afflicted persons from the sight or touch of the accused, which had also been accepted as testimony, he shows are no evidence of guilt, as he believes they are produced by demons; and he affirms that the oath and testimony of confessed witches, and of persons possessed, should never be received. A trial for witchcraft ought to be conducted by the same law and rules of evidence as a trial for murder, burglary, or any other felony. He says: —

"The Word of God instructs jurors and judges to proceed upon clear *human* testimony. But the Word no where giveth us the least intimation that every one is a witch, at whose look the bewitched person shall fall into fits; nor yet, that any other means should be used for the discovery of witches than what may be used for the finding out of murderers, adulterers, and other criminals. . . . The ways of trying witches long used in many nations (as the judicious Mr. Perkins expresseth it) were invented by the Devil, that so innocent persons might be condemned, and some notorious witches escape." (pp. 268, 270).

It will readily be seen that a trial for witchcraft, conducted by the "Boston method," would be a very harmless proceeding. There were no more executions after Mr. Mather's treatise appeared.[1] Says Cotton Mather, in the Life of his father (p. 166): —

"But what gave the most illumination to the country, and a turn to the tide, was the special service which he did in composing and publishing his very learned *Cases of Conscience concerning Witchcraft:* in which treatise he did with incomparable reason and reading demonstrate that the Devil may appear in the shape of an innocent and a virtuous person, to afflict those that suffer by diabolical molestations; and that the ordeal of the sight and touch is not a conviction of a covenant with the Devil, but liable to great exceptions against the lawfulness, as well as the evidence, of it. Upon this the Governor pardoned such as had been condemned, and the spirit of the country ran violently upon acquitting all the accused."

In the postscript of *Cases of Conscience* Increase Mather says: "Some, I hear, have taken up a notion that the book newly published by my son [*Wonders of the Invisible World*] is contradictory to this of mine. 'Tis

[1] [Some of the writers already referred to as implicating the Mathers in the Salem method, find ground for this view in what Increase Mather says in this treatise: "I hope the thinking part of mankind will be satisfied that there was more than that which is called spectre evidence for the conviction of the persons condemned. I was not myself present at any of the trials, excepting one, — viz., that of George Burroughs; had I been one of his judges, I could not have acquitted him." The writers of the other side claim that this extract should be taken with the explanation that Burroughs was hanged after conviction by human not spectral testimony. This is fully presented by Mr. Poole in his article in the *North American Review*, vol. cviii., and need not be gone into in detail here. — Ed.]

strange that such imaginations should enter the minds of men. I perused and approved of that book before it was printed; and nothing but my relation to him hindered me from recommending it to the world." [1]

5. Samuel Willard's *Some Miscellany Observations on our present Debates respecting Witchcrafts, in a Dialogue between S and B*, 1692.[2]

The subject of this anonymous pamphlet, of 16 pages, is substantially the same as that of *Cases of Conscience*, — How shall witch-trials be conducted? — but it is treated in the form of a dialogue between "S and B," which initials were probably intended to represent "Salem" and "Boston." "S" defends the spectral theory of the judges at Salem, and "B" the views of the Boston ministers. That Mr. Willard was the author of the tract appears from the statement of Cotton Mather in *Some Few Remarks*, p. 35; and Calef, in *More Wonders*, p. 38, quotes from it and mentions Mr. Willard as the author. Mr. Willard, in his views of witchcraft and its proper treatment, was perfectly in accord with the Mathers. The tract is written with great ability, and simply as a specimen of dialectic treatment it is not easy to name one that is its superior. "S" states and defends the popular theory of spectral evidence, and "B" subjects it to the most searching and scathing condemnation. There is no paper of the same limits extant which will give the reader so clear an insight into the essence of the exciting controversy, in 1692, concerning the methods of trying witches, which culminated in making it impossible for another person to be executed for witchcraft in New England.

6. Thomas Brattle's *Account of Witchcraft in the County of Essex*, 1692. Mr. Brattle was a prominent merchant of Boston, a large benefactor of Harvard College, and its treasurer from 1693 to his death in 1713. President Quincy says of him that "he was distinguished for opulence, activity, and talent, and for the zeal and readiness with which he devoted his time, wealth, and intellectual power to objects of private benevolence and public usefulness." [3] He was one of the founders of the Brattle-Street Church, and was a Fellow of the Royal Society.[4] Mr Brattle's *Account* is dated Oct. 8, 1692, and is addressed to a clergyman who had asked for the information, and whose name is unknown. The paper was first printed in 1798, in the fifth

[1] *Cases of Conscience* is reprinted in J. R. Smith's London edition of *Wonders of the Invisible World*, 1862, pp. 219–288; and the *Advice* of the Boston Ministers of June 15, 1692, is on pp. 289, 290. The latter is copied into Hutchinson's *History of Massachusetts* (ii. 52), with several verbal errors and omissions. It is omitted from *Salem Witchcraft*, 1867; and *Cases of Conscience* is not even mentioned in that work.

[2] The only original copy of this tract which I have seen is in the Library of the Mass. Hist. Society. It was printed at Philadelphia, by William Bradford, for Hezekiah Usher. Mr. Usher was one of the persons arrested for witchcraft. He was kept for two weeks in a private house, and then suffered to escape from the Province. Mr. Brattle (p. 69) complains of the partiality shown him, when other persons whose cases were the same were actually imprisoned, and refused bail on any terms. The tract has been reprinted in the *Congregational Quarterly*, Boston, July, 1869, ii. 401, and issued in a separate form. No mention is made of it in *Salem Witchcraft*, 1867.

[3] *History of Harvard College*, i. 410.

[4] The statement, often repeated, that a person of Mr. Brattle's character, standing, and dignity assisted Robert Calef in the preparation of his book (see *Mass. Hist. Soc. Proc.*, 1858, p. 288; and *Salem Witchcraft*, ii. 461) is too improbable to be seriously considered.

volume of the *Massachusetts Historical Collections*, pp. 60–79. It contains much important information which is mentioned by no other writer. "I am very open," says Mr. Brattle, "to communicate my thoughts unto you, and in plain terms to tell you what my opinion is of the Salem methods." He describes and pronounces them "rude and barbarous methods." "This Salem philosophy," he says, "some men may call the new philosophy; but I think it deserves the name of Salem superstition and sorcery, and it is not fit to be named in a land of such light as New England is." Concerning the witnesses who confessed that they had made a league with the Devil, he says: —

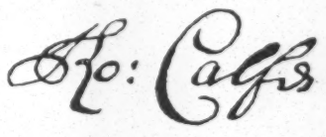
> "They are deluded, imposed upon, and under the influence of some evil spirit; and, therefore, unfit to be evidences either against themselves or any one else. . . . But although the Chief Judge [Stoughton] and some of the other judges be very zealous in these proceedings, yet this you may take for a truth, that there are several about the Bay, men of understanding, judgment, and piety, inferior to few, if any, in New England, that do utterly condemn the said proceedings, and do freely deliver their judgment in the case to be this, viz: that these methods will utterly ruin and undo poor New England."

Several of them he mentions, — Simon Bradstreet, Thomas Danforth,[1] Increase Mather, Samuel Willard, and Nathaniel Saltonstall.

> "Excepting Mr. Hale [of Beverly], Mr. Noyes and Mr. Parris [both of Salem], the reverend elders, almost throughout the whole country, are very much dissatisfied. The principal men of Boston, and thereabout, are generally agreed that irregular and dangerous methods have been taken as to these matters."

Cotton Mather's name does not appear in the narrative, except as the friend and comforter of the accused. Mr. Brattle (p. 76) says: "I cannot but think very honorably of the endeavors of a reverend person in Boston," whom he does not name, but the description fitly applies to Mr. Mather.[2]

7. Robert Calef's *More Wonders of the Invisible World*, 1700.[3] "It is remarkable," says the writer of *Salem Witchcraft*, 1867 (ii. 461), "that Brattle does not mention Calef." No other writer of the date of 1692 mentions Calef. There is doubt at this day who Calef was, though the writer named says he was "a son of Robert Calef, of Roxbury." The name nowhere appears until the Salem tragedy had been acted, the curtain had dropped, the lights had gone out, and the community had recovered its senses. If he be the person mentioned, Calef must have been, from the best genealogical inferences which can now be drawn, a

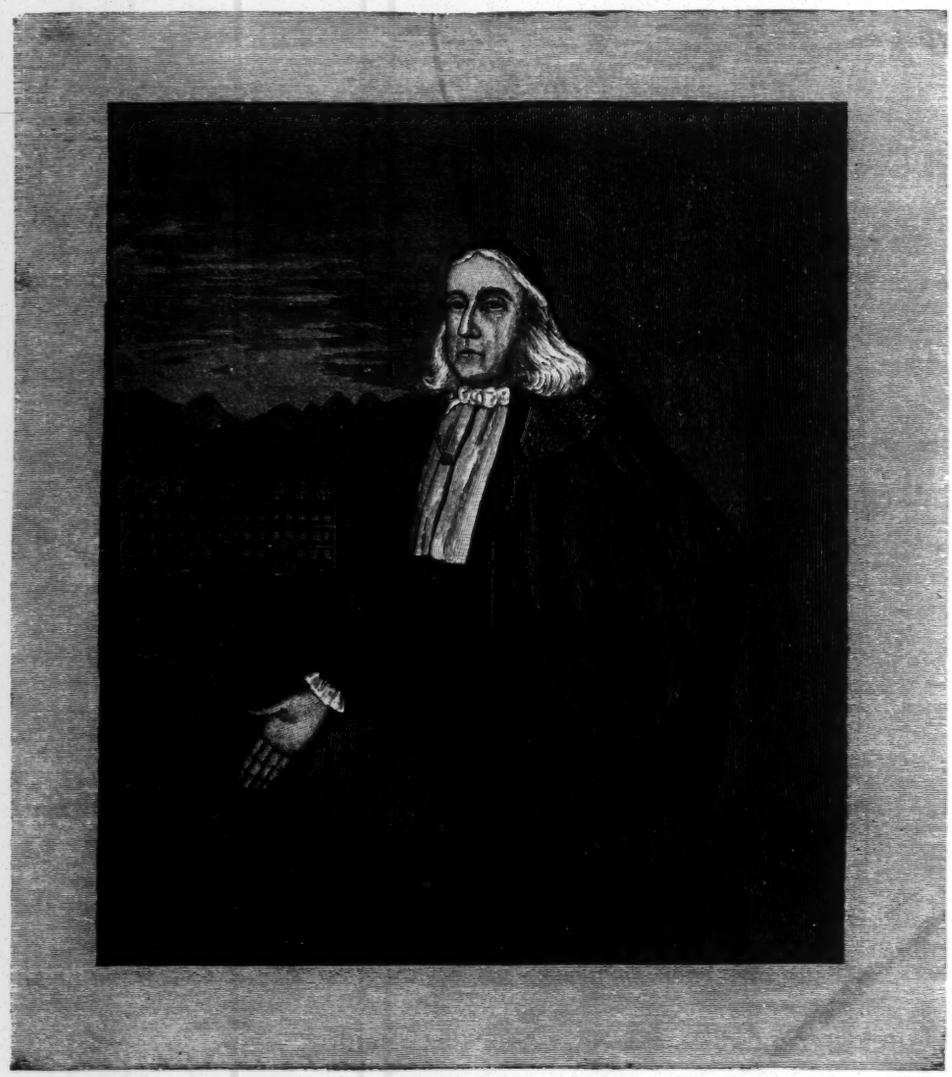


[1] For interview with Danforth, see *Sewall's Diary*, i. 367.

[2] See *North American Review*, 108, p. 387, where I have given the grounds on which this opinion was based. The compliment has been claimed for Mr. Willard; but Mr. Willard received his tribute of praise openly, and by name, on the preceding page.

[3] [It seems to have been issued in two London impressions in 1700, or at least Mr. Deane's copy has two titles which are different, but one is manuscript. — ED.]

boy of fourteen or fifteen years of age, flying his kite or trundling his hoop in the streets of Boston, when Mr. Brattle wrote his account. The reputation which has been associated with the name of Calef for the past century, as a stalwart agent in putting an end to Salem witchcraft, is an anachronism,



WILLIAM STOUGHTON.[1]

a myth, and a delusion. His personal history is a blank which the most assiduous investigation has not been able to fill, or even to supply with the most common details. It is not known where or when he was born, when

[1] [This likeness of the presiding Justice in the Salem witchcraft trials follows a portrait now hanging in Memorial Hall, at Cambridge. Unlike Sewall, he never was brought to acknowledge his error in the matter. His character is drawn in Dr. Ellis's chapter. — Ed.]

he died, or where he was buried; and yet he lived in Boston, "the Metropolis of the English America," and his will is on file in the Suffolk Records.[1] In his book he styles himself "Merchant, of Boston;" in a deed executed shortly before he died, "Clothier;" and by Cotton Mather he is styled "Weaver;" "a man who makes little conscience of lying;" "a very wicked sort of a Sadducee," etc.

The earliest mention of the name of Robert Calef on record in connection with witchcraft is in an account of a visit he made, Sept. 13, 1693, at the house of Margaret Rule, she then being in the midst of her diabolical afflictions. Thirty or forty other persons were in the room. Increase and Cotton Mather called at the same time to administer spiritual consolation. Calef made a second visit six days later, when the Mathers were not present, and he wrote out an account of both visits, in which he freely used the names of the Mathers. These accounts he circulated in the community. Cotton Mather, hearing of the use he was making of their names, sent for the paper, and, on examining it, pronounced its statements base and malicious falsehoods, and threatened to prosecute him if he circulated the paper any further. A bitter and life-long quarrel was the result. Calef persisting in his course, Mr. Mather caused him to be arrested for libel. Calef thereupon wrote to Mr. Mather a letter, half-apologetical, professing to be "one that reverences your person and office," expressing his belief in witchcraft, and desiring an interview at the book-seller's, that they might exchange views on the subject of diabolism.[2] In consequence of this letter Mr. Mather did not appear against him; and on Jan. 15, 1693–94, wrote to him a very severe and fatherly letter,[3] stating that he found "scarcely any one thing in the whole paper, whether respecting my father or myself, fairly

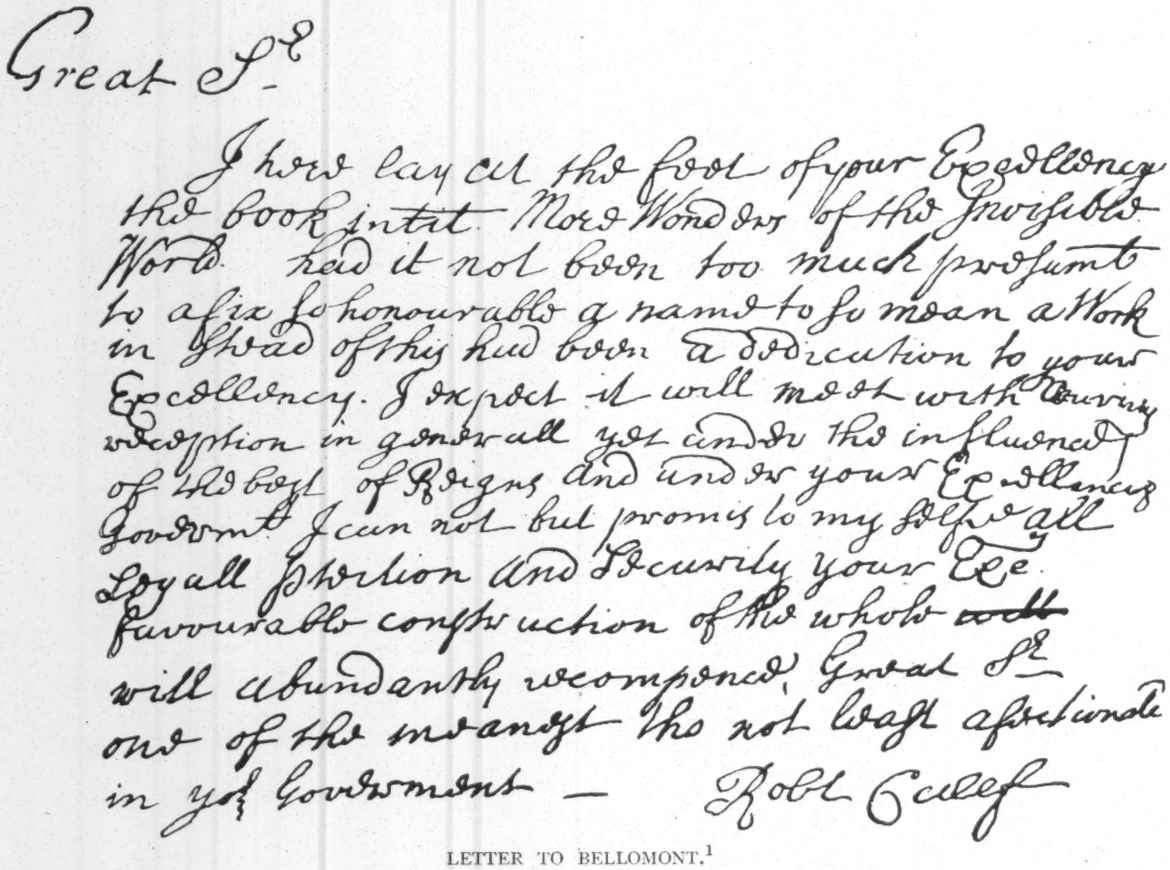
[1] Mr. S. G. Drake, in *Witchcraft Delusion in New England*, 1876, v. ii., gives the "Pedigree of Calef," and makes Robert Calef — the collector of *More Wonders* (for the book professes to have no *author*) — the fourth son of Robert Calef (or Calfe, or Calf; the name was variously written), who died at Roxbury, April 13, 1719, aged 71 years. Mr. Savage and many other writers make substantially the same statements, and they are probably correct. There is no uncertainty about the date of death or the age of the senior Robert Calef; for they are taken from his gravestone at Roxbury. He must, therefore, have been 44 years of age in 1692; and his fourth son Robert could not have been, in the natural order of events, more than 14 or 15 years old in 1692. Mr. Drake states that the son "died near the close of 1722 or early in 1723, aged about 45." Mr. Savage says: "Of his death we have no exact date; but it was between April [11] 1722 [when he released a mortgage deed, signing his name "Robert Calfe"] and Feb. 18 following, when his will was proved. Ever honored be his name!" etc. Assuming that he died late in 1722 or early in 1723, aged about 45, he would have been about 15 or 16 years of age in 1693 when his name first appears, and about 23 when his book was published.

Within the past five years a doubt has been suggested as to the identity of the person whose name is attached to the book. The doubt has arisen from the apparent improbability that one so young as the son could have written or compiled such a noted book. (See *N. E. Hist. and Geneal. Reg.*, xxx. 461; and F. S. Drake's *History of the Town of Roxbury*, 1878, p. 149). These writers claim that Robert Calef, Sr., and not the son, was the compiler, and the person whose memory we are expected to honor. I have not seen the evidence to justify either the statement or the expectation. There is nothing in the book which a person of the age of the son, with the help he had, could not have done; and there is much in it which can best be explained by assuming it to be the work of an immature youth. My conservative tendencies lead me to side with the older genealogists.

[2] *More Wonders of the Invisible World*, p. 16. Original edition.

[3] Ibid., p. 19.

or truly represented." He points out at great length where Calef has done them both great injustice and injury. He proposed, in case Calef desired a true and full narrative of the visit, "whereof such an indecent



Great Sr

I here lay at the foot of your Excellency the book intit. More Wonders of the Invisible World. had it not been too much presumt to affix so honourable a name to so mean a Work in Head of this had been a dedication to your Excellency. I expect it will meet with various reception in generall yet under the influence of the best of Reigns and under your Excellencys Govermt I can not but promis to my selfe all Loyall portion and Security your Excs favourable construction of the whole will abundantly recompence. Great Sr one of the meanest who not least affectionate in yor Govermt — Robt Calef

LETTER TO BELLOMONT.[1]

travesty hath been made," to furnish one. He offered Calef the use of his library, and invited him to his study, if he cared to investigate the subject of witchcraft. Calef's conduct in this matter was that of an unscrupulous, conceited, and mischievous boy. He writes like a boy, beginning the narrative of his visit to Margaret Rule in this fashion: "In the evening, *when the sun was withdrawn, giving place to darkness to succeed*, I, with some others, *were* (*sic*) drawn by curiosity to see Margaret Rule."[2] Calef afterward wrote a succession of crude, rambling letters to Mr. Mather, Mr. Willard, Mr. Wadsworth, "To the Ministers, whether English, French, or Dutch," and "To the Ministers in and near Boston;" each one growing more presuming, until they became positively insulting and libel-

[1] [This fac-simile comes to the Editor through Mr. Deane, and is of an original letter in a copy of Calef's book in the Lenox Library, which seems to have been a presentation copy to Governor Bellomont. It was obtained by Mr. Lenox from Obadiah Rich, and bears the bookplate of Sir William Grace, Bart. — ED.]

[2] *More Wonders*, p. 13.

lous. To none of these epistles did he receive a reply, and he felt chagrined at the indifference and contempt in which he was held by the clergy. Said Mr. Mather, in *Some Few Remarks* (pp. 34, 35):—

"I have had the honor to be aspersed and abused by Robert Calef. I remember that when this miserable man [he was then, 1701, twenty-three or twenty-four years of age] sent unto an eminent minister in the town [Mr. Willard] a libellous letter, which he has now published, and when he demanded an answer, that reverend person only said: 'Go, tell him that the answer to him and his letter is in the 26th of Proverbs and the 4th' ['Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him']. The reason that made me unwilling to trust any of my writings in the hands of this man was, because I saw the weaver (though he presumes to call himself a merchant) was a stranger to all the rules of civility; and I foresaw I should be served as now I find."

A large share of the credit which in modern times has been awarded to Robert Calef grows out of the impression that, in an age when everybody else believed in witches and witchcraft, he was a disbeliever in the whole theory of diabolism. If we assume that his book was an honest expression of his opinions, — but the Boston ministers, whom he libelled, held that there was nothing honest in the book, — he was not a disbeliever in witchcraft. "Not but that there are witches," he says in his preface (p. 3), "such as the law of God describes." Again (pp. 17, 18):—

"That there are witches is not the doubt; the Scriptures else were in vain, which assign their punishment to be by death; but what this witchcraft is, or wherein it does consist, seems to be the whole difficulty. . . . And [I] do further add, that as the Scriptures are full that there is witchcraft, so 'tis as plain that there are possessions; and that the bodies of the possessed have hence been not only afflicted, but strangely agitated, if not their tongues improved to foretell futurities, etc., and why not to accuse the innocent as bewitching them, having pretence to divination to gain credence. This being reasonable to be expected from him who is the father of lies, to the end that he may thereby involve a country in blood, malice, and evil, surmising which he greedily seeks after, and so finally lead them from their fear and dependence upon God to fear him, and a supposed witch, thereby attaining his end upon mankind."

With this full avowal of his belief in the then popular idea of witchcraft, he had a whimsey on the brain that witches could not "commissionate" (this was a favorite word of his) devils to afflict and molest mortals. This proposition, years after the trials were at an end, and when the community was slowly recovering from the sad memories of 1692, Calef was constantly bringing to the attention of the ministers, and challenging them to discuss it with him. What he had to say against the injustice of the methods of trying witches by spectral testimony at Salem had all been said, and better said, by the two Mathers, Mr. Willard, and the other Boston ministers. The obvious intent of Calef and the several unknown contributors who aided him was to malign the Boston ministers and to make a sensation.

It is difficult to determine how much of the book was written by Calef himself, or what responsibility he had in its compilation. The early letters were probably his own; though he prints them, he says, "with some small variation or addition." The later controversial letters over his initials, if he wrote them at all, he doubtless had assistance in. A Scotchman named Stuart contributed two letters to prove the reality of witchcraft. The historical portions, which are full of errors or something worse, and the review of Mather's *Life of Sir Wm. Phips*, must have been furnished by a person more mature than Calef. The reports of the Salem trials were copied bodily from Mather's *Wonders of the Invisible World*.

The book was printed in London in 1700, eight years after witch prosecutions in New England were forever at an end, and when the country was fully conscious of, and was mourning over, the dreadful scenes which had occurred at Salem. To religious minds it seemed like indecent sacrilege to tear open these healing wounds. For two years or more previous to the publication, Calef had been showing portions of his manuscript, and saying he should send it to England to be printed. The ministers were greatly annoyed thereby, for they knew they were misrepresented and slandered therein.[1] When the book was printed and came back to Boston, there was naturally great excitement and indignation concerning it. This feeling had little relation to any opinions Calef had expressed, or any statements he may have made, on the matter of witchcraft. That was an old and worn-out theme. The book was denounced and hated because it was an untruthful and atrocious libel on the public sentiment of Boston, and on the conduct of its ministers. Dr. Eliot says Increase Mather publicly burned the book at Harvard College. Mr. Mather had resided in England for four years as a preacher, and four years as an agent of the Massachusetts Colony. He had many personal friends and correspondents in England, and he was especially sensitive as to his reputation there. Cotton Mather was enraged beyond expression at the abuse which his father and himself received in the book.[2] Nothing so kindled the wrath of the son as abusive treatment of his father.

Besides the malicious innuendoes with which the book abounds, Calef directly charges both the Mathers with inciting, and being in full sympathy with, the Salem tragedies. "It is rather a wonder," he says, p. 153, "that no more blood was shed; for if that advice of his [the Governor's] pastors

[1] *Mass. Hist. Soc. Proc.*, 1858, p. 289.

[2] The measure of Mr. Mather's indignation may be inferred from the means he took to repress it. Nov. 5, 1700 (a copy of Calef's book had just arrived in Boston), he wrote in his Diary: "I set myself to beseech the Lord that he would assist me with his grace to carry it prudently and patiently, and not give way to any distemper under the buffets which are now likely to be given unto me, but imitate and represent the gentleness of my Saviour. And I resigned the whole matter unto the Lord, praying that my opportunities to glorify my Lord Jesus Christ might not be prejudiced. Other supplications proper on this occasion I carried before the Lord; and a sweet calm was produced in my mind." Mr. Mather regarded himself as "the chief butt of his [Calef's] malice, though many other better servants of the Lord are most maliciously abused by him."—*Mass. Hist. Soc. Proc.*, 1858, p. 290.

[the two Mathers] could have still prevailed with the Governor, witchcraft had not been so shammed off as it was." The book charges the Boston ministers, in their advice of June 15, 1692, with endorsing the Salem methods. It accuses Cotton Mather with immodest conduct in handling Margaret Rule, and praying with her alone. It arraigns Mr. Mather for his management in the case of the Goodwin children, and for "kindling those flames that, in Sir William [Phips]'s time, threatened the devouring this country," — meaning Salem witchcraft. It misrepresents Mr. Willard's *Some Miscellany Observations* as "liable to a male (*sic*) construction, even to the endangering to revive what it most opposes, and to bring those practices again on foot which in the day thereof were so terrible to this whole country" (p. 38). Calef, or some one using his initials, wrote to Mr. Wadsworth, pastor of the First Church, and later President of Harvard College, criticising a sermon preached Jan. 14, 1697, on the occasion of a public fast, observed on account of the errors committed in the time of the late witchcrafts, and said: "For a minister of the gospel (pastor of the old meeting) to abet such notions, and to stir up the magistrates to such prosecutions, and this without any cautions given, is what is truly amazing, and of most dangerous consequence" (p. 53).

It is obvious that a book of this character, printed while all the men maligned in it were living, would make a sensation; and the only mystery about it is, that in modern times the animus of the book has been so misunderstood, and that its historical value and the character of its author have been so over-rated.

8. *Some Few Remarks upon a Scandalous Book against the Gospel and Ministry of New England, written by one Robert Calef*, 1701. This publication is an indignant reply, by seven members of the Second Church, to the charges which Calef's book had heaped upon their two ministers and the other clergymen of Boston. One of the writers was John Goodwin, the father of the children who had been strangely afflicted in 1688.[1]

On Dec. 4, 1700, Cotton Mather writes thus in his Diary: —

"My pious neighbors are so provoked at the diabolical wickedness of the man who has published a volume of libels against my father and myself, that they set apart whole days of prayer to complain unto God against him, and this day particularly."

Again, in February, he writes: —

"Neither my father nor myself thought it proper for us to publish unto the churches our own vindication from the vile reproaches and calumnies that Satan, by his instrument Calf, had cast upon us; but the Lord put it into the hearts of a con-

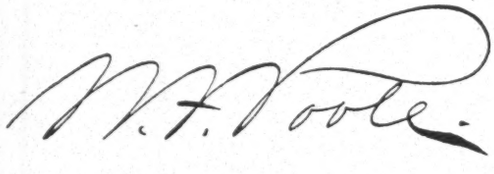
[1] John Goodwin here tells again the story of his domestic afflictions. He replies to Calef's slanders by stating that Cotton Mather had nothing to do with the case until his children had been under their strange molestations for three months; and then he invited Mr. Mather to his house, with other ministers, to pray for them. "Never before," he says, "had I the least acquaintance with him; he never advised me to anything concerning the law or trial of the accused persons," and "matters were managed by me in prosecution of the supposed criminal wholly without the advice of any minister or lawyer, or any other person" (p. 46).

siderable number of our flock, who are in their temporal condition more equal unto our adversary, to appear in our vindication. . . . The book being hereupon printed, the Lord blesses it for the illumination of his people in many points of our endeavor to serve them, whereof they had been ignorant."

Calef made no reply in print, though Mr. Mather intimates in his Diary, April 5, that Calef was going on with his scribblings; and witchcraft soon ceased to be a subject of public comment in New England. Except for Calef's book the discussion would have ended six or eight years earlier.

The theory of witchcraft, after the methods of its treatment had been reformed, was as harmless as the doctrine of Foreordination in the Westminster Catechism. The belief, however, in the reality of witchcraft retained its hold on the popular mind for many years later. What has been called "the explosion of the witchcraft delusion," immediately following and in consequence of the Salem executions, is itself a delusion. Twenty years afterward, when the General Court reversed the attainders of the persons executed in 1692, and voted compensation to their families, the public act of the Court began thus: "Forasmuch as, in the year of our Lord 1692, two several towns within this Province were infested with a horrible witchcraft or possession of devils," etc.; and it assigns as the cause of those errors "the influence and energy of the evil spirits, so great at that time, acting in and upon those who were the principal accusers and witnesses, proceeding so far as to cause a prosecution to be had of persons of known and good reputation." [1]

As the men of that generation passed away, the opinion became prevalent that the strange manifestations which had amazed the beholders were acts of fraud and deception on the part of the "afflicted children;" and when Governor Hutchinson wrote, seventy years later, this was his opinion, and largely that of the educated men of his day. A belief, however, in spiritual and diabolical agency has never wholly faded out from the minds of the masses.[2] In our day it has been revived by a school or sect which claims to have six million adherents in the United States. Those who hold the doctrines of modern "Spiritualism" will see in the elevation of Margaret Rule from her bed, — which they call "levitation," — and in the conduct of the "afflicted children," incidents which have occurred under their own eyes, or are recorded as verities in the books in which they have implicit confidence.



[1] Woodward's *Records of Salem Witchcraft*, 1864, ii. 216.

[2] Aug. 3, 1863, an aged deaf-and-dumb person, at Castle Hedingham, Essex County, England, who was supposed to be a wizard, was subjected to the Hopkins water-test by a mob of small tradesmen, and died from his injuries. *Annual Register*, 1863, p. 147.